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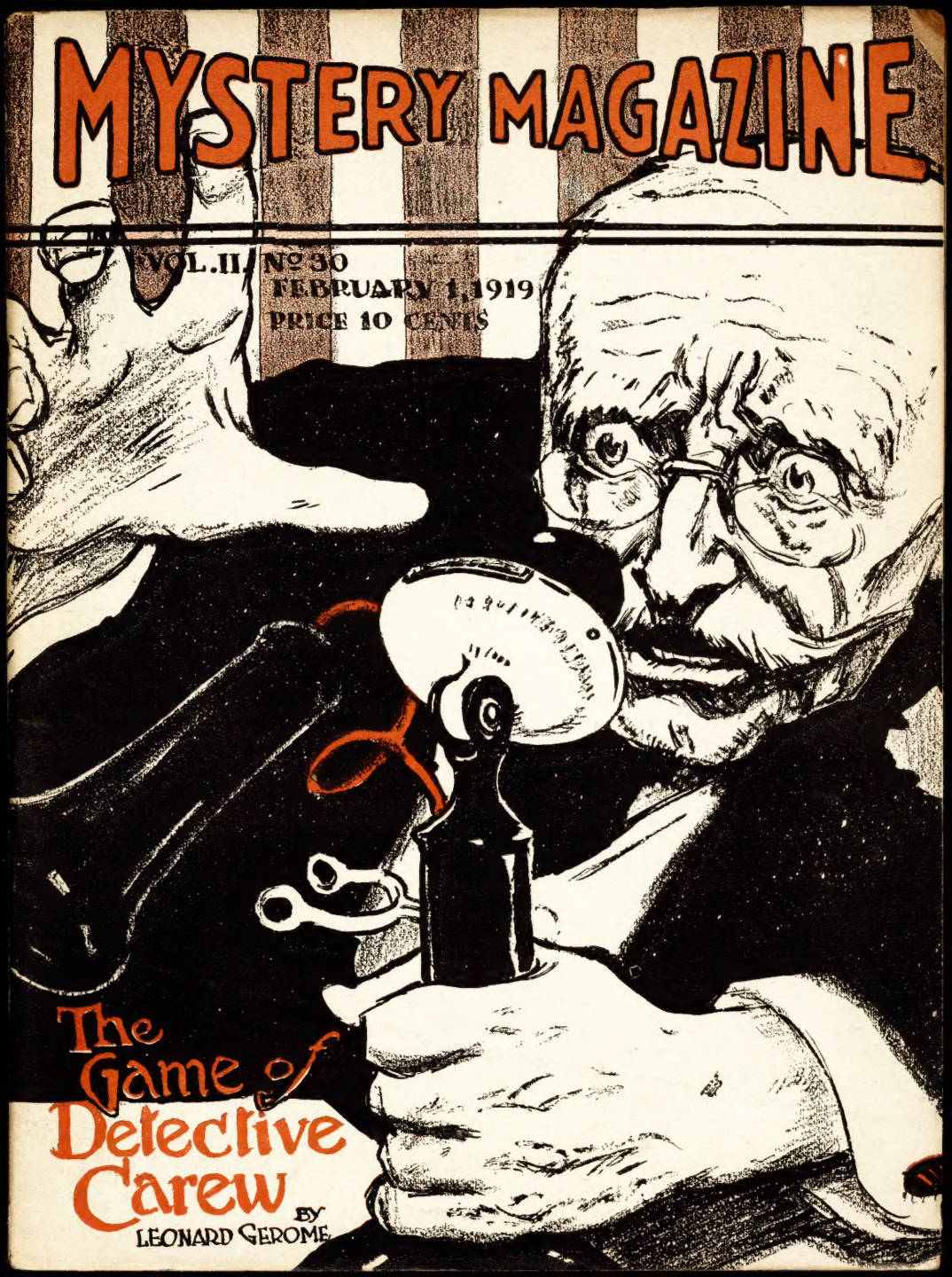

The Game of Detective Carew

BY LEONARD GEROME

Beulah Poynter's Masterpiece, "Law-Maker and Law-Breaker," Is Our Next Feature Story

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW

A STORY OF DRAMATIC INTEREST

By LEONARD JEROME

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE ORIENTAL

"THIS is the apartment, Mr. Carew, that was entered and looted during the temporary absence of the tenant. I asked you over the phone to please drop in and advise me, because we have known each other a long time; and I owe everything I have to-day, sir, to your kindness and generosity."

Morgan Carew, the detective, turned from scrutinizing the closed door before which he stood, and gave the superintendent of the fashionable Oriental Apartments a reassuring smile and nod.

"There is nothing to that, John," he remarked, "except that I believed you had it in you to make good, if given a fair chance; and I simply saw that you got it. The main thing that influenced me to take stock in you was the fact of your having such a faithful champion in your wife, Rebecca Tarbox, who clung to you through good and evil report; and I am glad to know she is contented and happy at last. Now, open this door, please, and let me see what sort of a mare's nest you've discovered here on this fine May morning."

Tarbox no longer held back, but inserting a master-key in the lock, proceeded to throw open the door. No sooner were they both inside the apartment than the cautious superintendent quickly secured the door against any possibility of intrusion. He evidently understood that the detective would wish to conduct his investigation without interruption.

Carew looked about him.

There appeared to be sufficient light coming in to see fairly well; but seemingly not wholly satisfied, he stepped over and allowed a shade to go half-way to the top of the window. In his code it was always essential to look for minute details or traces, even to examining the furniture for faint marks of finger-prints, since such trifles often afforded most direct and incriminating clues by means of which he hoped to identify the offender. Even a novice could easily see that there was something unusual about that room. It looked as though a cyclone had struck it for articles of all description were scattered in every direction.

Carew had looked upon just such scenes before. He knew how thieves in search of concealed valuables, and with possibly scant time at their disposal, were apt to hurl things right and left, thus venting their disappointment, it might be, on dumb and unoffending objects.

He nodded his head as though satisfied, while the anxious Tarbox watched his sphinx-like face eagerly to see what was coming next.

"Looks as if they had made a thorough job of it, John," remarked the detective grimly. "In fact, I don't believe I ever came across such confusion in a looted apartment before. One would think the party doing this might be mad clear through; or else had some deeper motive back of it all."

He did not venture to explain the meaning of his last words, nor did the superintendent think to display any curiosity concerning the same. He stood there and watched Carew passing quickly about the room, bending down many times to examine some object that had caught his attention particularly. There was a double line on the forehead of Tarbox, and with good reason. His past history would not bear the closest scrutiny, since he had once "done time" for robbery, and might still have been a member of the underworld only for the pleadings of his wife, and the sincere friendship of Morgan Carew, the latter of whom had succeeded in placing him on his feet and giving him the fresh start in life that so few ex-convicts ever secure.

Consequently a robbery in the Oriental Apartments was likely to attract the attention of the reporters, and city fly-cops also; to sooner or later bring out the significant fact that the trusted superintendent was no other than one "Jack" Tarbox, who had some years back been known as a clever rogue.

Carew even went to the window and looked out, turning his head both ways, and glancing upward as well as down. No doubt he noticed how the fire-escape was close by, and that an agile as well as daring thief might find it within his power to pass from the iron staging to the sill of the window belonging to that particular apartment.

Then he came back to Tarbox. The next stage of his investigation would take on the form of questioning the other, in hopes of picking up clues worth while.

"Who is your unlucky tenant here, John?" he asked. "I use that word advisedly, because his safe door is standing wide open, and with papers scattered about the floor, it looks as though he must have been robbed of something of value."

"Mr. Hubert Carbodie occupies this apartment, sir, and at present he is out of town," came the reply, at which the detective's eyebrows went up at an angle, as though something significant had suddenly struck him.

"The name sounds familiar to me, John, although I don't remember of ever having had the pleasure of personally meeting the young gentleman. I believe he is said to be rather hard-up at present, although known to be a nephew of the wealthy ex-banker and broker, Mr. Philip Carbodie.

"And," continued the detective reflectively, "rumor also says that there is a good chance of young Hubert being made his stern uncle's heir, since it is generally believed that the elder Carbodie has remained a single man all his life, a regular sybarite, too, some people call him, being especially fond of luxury and the good things that come with great wealth."

"Well, sir, I don't know just how much truth there might be in that sort of talk," said the superintendent quickly. "Mr. Philip Carbodie certainly likes to surround himself with elegant things, and demands a whole lot of attention; but he is liberal with his money, too. You simply have to be careful to rub him the right way."

"Like a lot of other rich men, John," commented the other; "but how do you happen to know so much about the gentleman? Is it possible that he is also one of your tenants in the Oriental?"

"Just as you say, sir; Mr. Philip Carbodie has been with us for several years now. I always manage to get along fairly well with him; and he has been quite good to the missus, sending her up a fine turkey every year at Thanksgiving time. His apartments are by long odds the finest decorated rooms in the house, sir. His sitting-room is exactly underneath us as we stand here, I might add, sir."

Again the eyebrows of Carew were elevated. Possibly he saw something more significant about this last bit of information than could have occurred to the superintendent. He stepped over to the window again and took another look downward. He also seemed to be scrutinizing the sill carefully, even taking out and utilizing his magnifying-glass, without which no modern detective has dared pursue his daily calling ever since its incalculable value was demonstrated by one Sherlock Holmes.

"Tell me who has the apartment above us, please?" Carew went on asking, as he rejoined the anxious superintendent.

"A gentleman named Doncaster, sir, Mr. Alan Doncaster. I believe he might be some sort of a sporting man, though he brought good references when he came here two weeks ago."

"Which, of course, might have been forged, or cleverly arranged so as to be signed by influential parties just then in Europe, or too far away to be reached in case you wished to look the references up. I shall want to meet the gentleman a little later, John; or at least have a look-in at his room. You never know where you may pick up some valuable clue in a case of this kind. But to return to the younger Mr. Carbodie; did you know he was going away, John?"

"Oh, yes, sir, he told me all about it, and even asked me to keep the key to his apartments for him," came the ready reply.

"That was a rather odd thing, don't you think, for a tenant to do, John?"

"Why, sir, it struck me as a bit unusual," admitted the other. "He's gone off lots of times before, and never did that. But he explained that it chanced he was holding some valuables belonging to a friend in his safe here, and the fact worried him. So he asked me to sort of keep an eye on his room for the two days he would be gone."

Carew emitted a peculiar little chuckle, while an amused gleam flashed in his eyes. Perhaps he remembered other occasions when some smart trickster laid out a clever scheme whereby he might make it appear he had been robbed, and thus default in payment to his creditors. It was an aged game, and he could detect certain ear-marks that

gave things a suspicious look. Still, it would not do to jump at conclusions too hastily. There would be much more to learn, Carew knew. At the same time he was conscious of a rising interest in the apparent burglary at the Oriental Apartments.

"You look worried, John," he now observed, at the same time placing a hand on the other's shoulders. "I wouldn't let it bother me if I were you. Depend on me to see you through, no matter if some of these newspapermen do come around buzzing you for facts so as to make a sensational story out of it."

Tarbox drew a long breath. He tried to appear more cheerful, but the effort was not very successful, Carew noticed.

"Look here, John, is there something else that you want to tell me, something that might have a bearing on this mysterious burglary?" he demanded, still resting that reassuring hand on the other's shoulder.

"Yes, sir, there is!" exploded Tarbox, as though encouraged to speak on. "And I'm afraid I can give a good guess whose hand did this job that is bound to reflect on me as a careless superintendent—if nothing worse!"

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAN ABOVE

"THAT'S a strange admission for you to make, John," observed Carew, with a scrutinizing look at his companion's agitated face; "but please go on and explain what you mean. Who is your suspect?"

"Jim Rud, one of the boldest scoundrels just now outside prison walls. Of course you know him, Mr. Carew?"

"Well, I should say I did," came the ready reply. "I had the pleasure of sending the same Jim up, some years back; though his time expired lately, and he's being watched, I understand. You knew him in the old days, did you, my friend?"

That one last word seemed to afford the anxious superintendent considerable relief; it told him that Mr. Carew still imposed boundless confidence in his strict integrity. He hastened to continue his explanations.

"Yes, we were in *quod* together, sir; we even worked in company before we were sent up the river for different jobs. I hadn't seen Jim for all that time; in fact, had almost forgotten such a man existed, when he dropped in to renew old acquaintance, as he called it. I was terribly uneasy all the time he stayed, for he talked so slick, and even got me to show him around the place, under the plea that he, too, had turned over a new leaf, quit the old business and meant to live honest right along. But he asked many questions that worried me after he had gone, because the suspicion came into my mind Jim had been lying to me, and that he was on his old lay of picking up valuable information, looking to some future use."

"I suppose then you kept an extra vigilant watch after that, didn't you, John?" queried Carew.

"It happened two days back, sir, and honest, now, I've hardly been able to sleep since then. Last night the wind blew great guns, too, and it looked for a time as if we might be going to have a fierce storm, though not a drop of rain fell. My wife has noticed that I'm worried, though I haven't had the heart to tell her about Jim's visit, because it would do no good, and only brings up the ugly past, which I'm hoping she's gradually forgetting. So you can see what ails me, sir. If it turns out that Jim Rudd did this job then it is bound to reflect on me. Lots of people wouldn't stop at saying I was in cahoots with him, and actually let him in."

"Leave it all to me, John," came the reassuring words of the detective. "Your frankness in telling this is proof enough that you are innocent. It promises to be a pretty case; but you know I'm never happier than when up against what seems like a blank wall. There's always a way out, and I mean to find it. Now, before we go any father in this matter I'd like to find if your Mr. Alan Doncaster, who has just been in the house a couple of weeks, quite long enough to learn the ropes, is in his room upstairs. I have failed to hear the slightest sound of a footstep since we entered here."

"If you'd care to go with me, sir, I can soon learn that," suggested Tarbox eagerly.

"Lead the way, then, and we may run across something more in the way of interesting facts," Carew told him. "I've often found these sporting men well worth looking over; for they are accustomed to taking desperate chances and balk at nothing when they have an object in view."

The superintendent of course fastened the door after him as they left the apartment of young Hubert Carbodie, a fact Carew noticed, and which appeared to please him, if that little approving nod meant anything.

"If Mr. Herbert chances to return while we are away there's a nice little surprise and a shock waiting for him," chuckled the detective. "I can imagine how excited he will become, perhaps even summoning you to his apartment, to demand if that is the way you take extra pains to guard his property during his absence."

Tarbox did not reply. The prospect appeared to be anything but pleasing to him, it was plainly evident; for Carew could hear him gritting his teeth on account of his helplessness.

They passed to the next floor by way of the stairs. Half-way up Carew asked another question that might have had considerable bearing on the solving of the mystery that had come to the Oriental the night before.

"By the way, John, would it be possible for any clever person to slip up these stairs without you or the elevator boy knowing it?"

"Why, yes, sir, I believe it would be easy enough, especially when the elevator was in use, and perhaps way up at the seventh floor. But all our doors have especially good locks, and the tenants are careful about not leaving them unfastened at any time of the day or night. Twice in the last year, though, we caught stray women on the stairs, who pretended to be looking for some one; but I always believed they meant to lay their hands on any valuables if they found a door that would yield to their attempts. This is really the first robbery of any importance in the Oriental since I took charge here some years ago."

By this time they were in front of a door which the superintendent seemed to know was connected with the apartments of Alan Doncaster. He proceeded to knock, but received no answer.

"Give another try, John, louder than before," suggested Carew; "and if there's no reply we'll take it for granted the gentleman is out; so as the superintendent you're empowered to enter his rooms, even as his valet might, if he had such an appendage."

Thus advised, Tarbox soon effected an entrance. The room was devoid of human occupancy, as both of them saw immediately they entered. There was a second apartment connected by a door that stood invitingly open. Carew passed swiftly over and thrust his head through the aperture, to learn that the bed, while disarranged as

though some one might have slept there, now held no tenant, nor was there the first sign of Mr. Alan Doncaster anywhere within range of his vision.

With his accustomed skill Carew started to examine both rooms, and even pried into the closets, handling the clothes he found there as though he entertained hopes of discovering some incriminating evidence in the pockets, or concealed back of the linings; for he ran his hand along here and there with a movement that told of long practice in such lines.

So far as Tarbox could notice he did not appear to find anything that seemed of particular value in his search of the absent sporting gentleman's garments. But from a corner of the darkest closet Carew did fetch forth an object which he examined with particular minuteness.

It was a stout rope, braided, and of the very best material; and Tarbox noted that it had been knotted every ten or twelve inches. He felt a peculiar thrill at sight of this rope. Perhaps it brought back most vividly certain events in his own shady past that, despite all his efforts, he could never wholly banish from his mind.

"That's a queer thing to come across in a gentleman's closet, eh, John?" observed Carew, holding the knotted rope up in a contemplative fashion. "Now, it could hardly be used in case of fire, because I don't believe it would reach more than halfway to the ground; but it's quite long enough to allow a particularly bold chap to slide down to the room below; yes, and even go farther in case of necessity, let's say to the apartments of Mr. Philip Carbodie!"

"Then you suspect, sir——"

"Nothing as yet, John," interrupted the other hastily; "but finding this very useful rope corresponds with certain marks I discovered on the windowsill of the room below, it also makes me curious enough to want to look further among Mr. Alan Doncaster's effects with the hope of learning more about his identity. Though he might be a stranger to you, possibly I would recognize the gentleman as an old acquaintance."

With that he pursued his investigation, leaving no corner or drawer unmolested, yet restoring things as they were, Tarbox noticed, his admiration for the peculiar talents of this wonderful man growing apace. There was a locked trunk, but Carew had it undone so quickly it seemed as if he might possess the magic "open sesame" that compelled locks and bars to obey his will.

Once Tarbox heard him give a low exclamation, and he fancied there was a note bordering on satisfaction in the sound. He guessed from this that the search had not been all in vain.

"I think I know just who your Mr. Doncaster will turn out to be, John," he announced; but beyond that bare assertion there was no attempt made to share his knowledge or suspicion with the other. Nevertheless, Carew was smiling as though pleased when he finally straightened up, and went on to say:

"I'm through here, for the present, John, and I want to say that our visit, even though we did not find the gentleman at home, was not without a certain amount of profit. We have now looked into two apartments; there is one other I should like to have a peep at, if it could be managed decently. It is that one immediately *below* where the robbery was committed some time last night."

"You mean Mr. Philip Carbodie's apartments, do you not, sir?" faltered the superintendent, as though he very much disliked the idea of discommoding the wealthy and severe gentleman more than any other person among all his tenants.

"Exactly. You see, we have gone up, and now it is only fair we should also strike down. Possibly Mr. Philip may have heard shuffling noises above his head at some time during the night, if he chances to be a light sleeper; and in that way could give us pointers really worth while as to the time and other matters."

"I am willing to do anything you ask me, Mr. Carew," said Tarbox, as if making a decision with set jaws. "As a rule Mr. Carbodie doesn't rise as early as this; but considering the circumstances, with a robbery having taken place in the house, and the victim his own nephew, I feel sure he will excuse the intrusion. If you don't mind, sir, we could run down the stairs, and not bother waiting for the elevator to come up."

"I much prefer that way," Carew assured him; so together they walked over to where the stairs lay, and descended two flights.

This brought them to the fourth floor, where the finest apartments of the building were supposed to lie; and presently Tarbox stopped before a certain door, acting as if listening to detect any possible sounds from within such as would announce that the occupant were moving about.

"Nothing doing, eh, John?" inquired Carew, as the superintendent turned and looked at him as if inviting comment; "apparently Mr. Philip is still taking his morning nap, and his valet hasn't as yet arrived to groom his master; for I presume he sports such a luxury—most rich men do."

"He had a man here, sir, who had been in his service some years," explained Tarbox, speaking softly; "but he was taken to a hospital, I believe, and so far Mr. Carbodie doesn't seem to have had any luck getting a valet to suit him, though he's tried several, only to dismiss them as incompetent."

"H'm! I should imagine from what you tell me that he's a difficult man to please, which corresponds with what report says about him. But knock, and see if we can coax the gentleman to give us a few minutes of his time. Place all the blame on me, John, remember; I can stand even his temper if he proves unreasonable."

So Tarbox did knock, not only once but several times. There was no response to his loudest summons. He even stepped over to the second door of the apartment, the sleeping chamber, no doubt, and repeated the rapping.

"I don't seem able to awaken him, sir, and I really wouldn't like to knock louder for fear of disturbing the whole floor. There are other gentlemen here who might object to being aroused at this unusual hour in the morning. What had I better do next, sir?"

"You have a passkey, and can open his door, I suppose?" insinuated Carew. "It would be easy to explain the intrusion by saying that we feared something had happened to him; for when there has been a burglary in such a house as this, anything is possible, you understand; at least from my point of view, and I am responsible for whatever happens now."

Tarbox looked rather taken aback, but nevertheless he took out his master-key which he inserted in the lock. A turn, and he had the door ajar.

"Would you mind going in first this time, sir?" he asked Carew, almost entreatingly, the detective noticed; though it was easy to understand how Tarbox feared the peppery temper of his star tenant.

Then, as the detective pushed back the door and entered the Carbodie apartments he received such a shock as seldom came his way, accustomed as he must be to all manner of strange and thrilling experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRAGEDY BELOW.

THE scene of the robbery on the floor above had been quite exciting enough, but this exceeded it ten times over in elements calculated to make the heart beat like a trip-hammer and the pulses to throb wildly.

It spelled tragedy!

In the first place the electric light was turned fully on, which in itself at eight o'clock, with the sun three hours high, was a singular thing.

Then upon the floor of that elegant room lay the huddled figure of a man. That he had met with violence the presence of blood on the costly rug told as plainly as words could have done.

Carew's first action was suggestive of his customary bold method of seizing hold of a situation; for whirling on his heel he gripped Tarbox by the arm, dragged him across the threshold, and then closing the door turned the transferred key in the lock. The half-dazed superintendent was staring helplessly at the terrible figure lying on the floor just as he had fallen. There was a look of absolute horror on John's face, or else a well-simulated one, no one might as yet say which would prove to be the truth.

Carew dropped down and turned the head of the middle-aged man so that he might see his face, for he lay upon his chest, partly doubled up. The first thing noticeable was a jagged wound on his temple from which that blood on the rug must have oozed.

"I recognize him as Mr. Philip Carbodie, John, without telling me; and I am sorry to say he is quite dead—has been so some hours, at least."

The superintendent managed to find his voice, though it was subdued, and had a quiver about it that told of shaken nerves.

"This is bad business, Mr. Carew, doubly bad for me, because I'm in full charge here, you see, sir. What with a burglary above, and a murder below, it spells my finish, I'm afraid."

"Wait; don't jump at conclusions too fast, John," warned the other, with a grave face, as he again let the head of the dead man rest on the oriental rug that might have paid a prince's ransom, so costly was its texture. "I've known more than one such tragedy turn out to be an accident, after all. In the first place, notice that this apartment is in no such condition as the one above, which, as we understand, has been entered and robbed by some unknown party or parties? Everything seems to be in place, doesn't it strike you, John? You must be more or less familiar with things in here."

Tarbox glanced quickly about him, and then nodded. Upon his face lay a blank look as though he found himself swimming in strange waters, quite out of his accustomed sphere.

"Why, yes, sir, what you say is true," he admitted, after a quick though comprehensive survey. "So far as I can see there isn't a single article out of place, unless it's that heavy crystal paper-weight lying there on the floor. Oh, I wonder if that was the cause of his death; do you think it could have been thrown so as to strike him on the head, sir?"

"Possibly so, for the terrible wound is such as would be caused by contact with an article like this," and picking it up Carew examined the paper-weight closely, as though looking for signs of blood; "but if so it fails to disclose the fact. Is there anything peculiar about this crystal block, do you happen to know, John? Its composition is different from anything I can remember seeing before."

"I believe he brought it from Italy, or some other foreign country, sir; that is what he told me once when he saw me looking at it curiously. It must weigh all of two pounds, I should think; and it wouldn't take a very muscular hand to hurl it with enough force to do such a terrible job," and he shuddered as he stole another furtive look at the motionless and stiffened form close to their feet.

Carew was already passing over to the windows of of the apartment; as had happened on both other occasions when he was examining rooms on the next two floors above, he seemed to place considerable importance on a survey of these means for securing air and ventilation.

He found one window party open, and it was here he spent some little time, while Tarbox fidgeted, and tried to keep from allowing his eyes to rove in the direction of the floor, because of what he was bound to see there.

Minutes crept past.

Carew had kept moving about both rooms, prying into everything with an unsparing hand, always on the lookout for some promising clue calculated to unlock the dark mystery that had come to the Oriental Apartments, thus far singularly free from all such things that might serve to attract vulgar curiosity on the part of the public.

He had, Tarbox even noticed, replaced that heavy crystal paper-weight in exactly the spot where they discovered it. This was doubtless due in order that the coroner might find it, and draw his own conclusions. Such objects have their proper place on a library table or desk; and when discovered on the floor there must be some reason attached to account for the fact. Still, Carew must see that a man, suddenly stricken by a blow from some other weapon, in falling might easily have dragged the weight down with him as his groping hands flung through space.

"Do you chance to know anything about the movements of the gentleman last night, John?" the detective presently asked.

"Yes, sir, it happens that I am able to tell you what you want to know," came the steady reply. "As I said before, I have been so upset by meeting Jim Dudd, and the awful suspicion that he was contemplating a raid on one of my rich tenants' apartments, that I've haunted the corridors and elevator most of the nights. So I am in a position to affirm that for a wonder Philip Carbodie came in quite early for him, about eleven it was, I could take my oath, because he said his watch had stopped and asked me the time as he passed into the elevator and went up."

"You don't think he went out again, do you, John?"

"I am sure he did not, sir; and as our elevator stops running at midnight he would have had to climb the stairs. He was a portly man, as you can see for yourself, sir, and much averse to such labor. In fact, on many a night he has been known to actually pay the boy to stay over an extra hour, so that he might use the lift when he came in after the opera, or some such diversion."

"Then we can take it for granted he was in his apartment at eleven last night, never to leave it again until he is carried away to the cemetery. That was an hour and more before the storm broke, which you mentioned before; and as I was caught in it I can assure you the wind was terrific, although here in New York City no rain fell; further north they had a cloud-burst, I noticed the morning papers stated. Listen now to what I am going to ask you next, John, for it may be of the utmost importance."

"Yes, sir, I have got my head about me again, after this nasty shock; and I shall try my best to answer any question you see fit to put."

"Do you happen to know whether Mr. Carbodie had any visitor last night; that is, after you talked with him at the elevator?"

Watching his companion, Carew saw the face of the superintendent grow strangely ashen, as he drew a long breath. Then Tarbox said, as if talking to himself:

"Oh! it's utterly impossible that that chit of a girl could have done such a terrible thing as this! She was so weak and trembling, and pleaded so with me just to let her go up to speak with Mr. Carbodie. She told me her poor mother was sick, perhaps dying, for want of proper food and medicine, and that if she could only see *him* everything might be changed, for he had once known her mother very well. She even showed me an envelope containing a letter she said her mother had written to Mr. Carbodie. But she was hardly more than a child in years, sir, or I never would have consented to shut my eyes and let her slip up the stairs, so the elevator boy wouldn't know of my act. She showed me an envelope addressed to Mr. Philip Carbodie, too. Her tears broke me all up, I guess, and so I made what promises to be the worst mistake of my life; but it's hard to believe such a sweet little face could belong to one who would hurl that heavy paperweight so as to actually murder a big man!"

"This is mighty interesting what you're telling me now, John; and it stands to reason I must know everything that it is in your power to explain. Did you see the girl come down again later on; and if so, what time might have elapsed, do you think?"

"It couldn't have been more than twenty minutes at most when she slipped past me while I stood at the door, gliding off just like a ghost. She had her shawl held up to her face, but looked back once; and, sir, I shall never forget the expression of despair, or *something else*, that I saw there. Yes, it was as if some dumb horror had gripped hold of her heart. I've seen that white little face many times in thinking about the happening, and always with a feeling of regret. Poor little Molly, I would keep saying, sir; because I always did have a great liking for her."

"It seems then from what you say, John, that the girl was no stranger to you?" Carew remarked, with an interrogation in the words.

"Oh! no, sir! I knew Molly quite well. You see, she used to be located in the lobby of the Mammoth Hotel in this block, serving as a public stenographer; and as the cigar-stand was alongside her table, and I go in there for my tobacco supplies, I came to scrape an acquaintance with her. She impressed me as an unusually sweet little girl, and quite smart in the bargain."

"Then I must judge that Molly is no child, even though small of stature; is that correct, John?" continued the detective.

"Well, she can hardly be more than eighteen at the most, sir, and looks much younger than that; still, she has a 'steady,' I happen to know, for I've seen her a number of times going home in company with Jack Havens, a fine fellow, who will some day make her a good husband, when his small salary is increased."

"I chance to know a boy named Jack Havens; a clever, clean young chap, too," observed Carew with a smile; "and from what you say he may turn out to be Molly's 'steady.' But I never heard of her before. What is her full name, John, and tell me also what you happen to know about her people and what time was it when she went away?"

"That can be told in a breath, sir. It was just ten minutes after twelve when she passed out of the door. Her name is Molly Morton. So far as I've heard her only relative is a mother, who it seems is in a bad state of health. I believe the doctor has said that unless Mrs. Morton gets a change of air, and can be given certain treatment, she is certain to die before another winter. That knowledge has made poor little Molly's eyes fill with tears whenever the subject of her mother came up in our talks."

"Interesting, though as yet hardly illuminative," observed Carew. "By the way, John, is the girl still employed at the Mammoth?"

Tarbox shook his head in the negative.

"I was in there just yesterday getting some tobacco, and saw another stenographer in her place. On my asking about her the girl told me Miss Morton's mother was now feeling so badly that Molly could not leave her alone, and so had to give up her job. I'm sure I don't know how they will manage to get on, now that no money is coming in, for they have been living from hand to mouth as it was. I expect her visit to Mr. Carbodie had some connection with asking him to do something for her mother. And as he had the reputation for being a hard man, perhaps he roughly declined to help her; yes, it must have been his refusal that made her look so frightened when she went off—I never can believe it was anything like *this*," and he made a spasmodic movement with his hand to indicate the gruesome figure sprawled there on the elegant imported rug.

Carew dropped the questioning, and again made a round of both rooms, carefully examining everything as though searching for clues that might enable him to find light and solve the dark mystery connected with the tragic taking-off of the millionaire ex-banker; nor did the window ledge again escape his closest scrutiny.

Tarbox watched him with deepest interest, especially when the detective fished out blackened fragments of burnt paper from the open grate, and with his powerful magnifying-glass seemed endeavoring to decipher the faint evidences of writing still legible, despite the fact that the fire had done its full work, and consumed every particle of the original paper.

If he made any discovery Carew did not deem it necessary to communicate the fact to his companion, much to the disappointment of Tarbox. Instead he merely jotted down some notes in his memorandum book, and then turning to the superintendent, went on to say:

"I want you to keep absolutely dumb, even to your wife, concerning what has happened, both in the room above and down here in this apartment, until I give you permission to speak. I shall take all the responsibility should there be any complaint of negligence in sending information to the police and the coroner. I must see this girl for one thing, and learn what happened here last night when you allowed her to visit Mr. Carbodie. There is also some strange mystery connecting her with the gentleman that I'd like to have cleared up. And now, John, let's go upstairs again."

CHAPTER FOUR

SURPRISING DONCASTER

THE affair was taking on all the elements of surprise and anticipation so dear to the heart of a man of Morgan Carew's attainments. Already he could see that it would require quite an effort, as well as considerable skill, to

carry out his part as an investigator in order to clear up the mysterious happenings of that stormy May night at the Oriental Apartments.

Somehow or other he still believed that the robbery and the murder might be interlocked; the one having a close connection with the other. He chanced to know the conditions surrounding Hubert Carbodie, and that the young man had been leading a pretty fast life lately. Undoubtedly he was in one of his periodical "short" periods, when his creditors might be pressing for a speedy settlement, and the wealthy old uncle possibly turning a deaf ear to his pleadings that he again come to the rescue in this necessity.

That would make a sufficient cause for desperate action. Hubert might have visited the old man in secret, after taking adequate precautions to appear to be out of town.

When his pleadings failed to move the other, it was within the bounds of reason to suspect that, urged on by a sudden fit of the well-known Carbodie temper, which he, too, had inherited to some degree, the impecunious nephew might have even gone so far as to hurl that paper-weight, to bitterly repent of his action as soon as he realized the dreadful consequences.

If it could be discovered that he was actually in New York on the preceding night the case was apt to take on a black hue for young Mr. Hubert. Not only had he apparently carried out a mock burglary of his apartment, so as to hide some unlawful use of the funds left in his charge by a confiding friend, but going a step farther along the pathway of crime had, it might be, stained his hand in the blood of his uncle.

Then there was that other trail leading to the girl. Carew did not mean to let that scent grow cold; it presented too alluring a prospect for the veteran man-tracker to resist; and there were many things he must discover before deciding on the guilt or innocence of pretty little Molly Morton.

First of all, however, he would like to probe further into the activities of the new tenant, gay Alan Doncaster, the occupant of the room just above the looted apartment.

Carew was satisfied he might learn something of more or less importance from an interview with that gentleman. In fact, he felt confident that he would very likely recognize an old acquaintance in the said Alan; for certain ear-marks about the case, particularly the presence of that knotted rope, suggested things to the clever detective, so that if asked he could probably have mentioned the real name of John's latest tenant.

Presently they were again in the apartment where the rope had been found, and in answer to a question Tarbox was saying:

"Mr. Doncaster passed out an hour ago, sir, and when I remarked that was an early time for him to be abroad he laughed, and said he had some important business deal down in the Street for that day, and must breakfast with a friend. But he also told me he would be back inside of an hour; so if he keeps his word he ought to be along any minute now, sir."

"We'll wait a bit and give him a delightful surprise then," said Carew grimly. "Come into the other room with me, and we'll do our conversing in whispers. If he happened along and heard voices in his rooms he might take the alarm and depart without entering. I mean to have a little heart-to-heart talk with your new tenant; I rather imagine he may be able to give me a pointer or two that will help clear the air somewhat."

Accordingly they stepped into the second room and found comfortable seats, the detective in an easy-chair and Tarbox on the edge of the bed.

Possibly five minutes passed. Then they both caught the sound of the elevator coming up, for the shaft was not far removed from the door of Doncaster's apartments. Yes, the elevator-cage stopped at that floor, and Carew caught the sound of a voice, as some one called out merrily to the operator as the latter was about to once more descend in response to a call below.

Mr. Carew's eyebrows went up in a suggestive manner, and he appeared to be quite pleased, from which fact it was evident that he must have certainly recognized the voice in the corridor without. It harmonized completely with the conviction he was entertaining regarding the identity of "Doncaster."

Ah! some one was at the outer door, which the superintendent, acting under orders from Carew, had made sure to lock after their second entry. The detective had risen to his feet, making a motion for his companion to remain motionless where he was. He glided noiselessly over, and peeped through the crack of the connecting door, which he had made sure to leave slightly ajar for this very purpose.

A young man had entered the other room. He was glancing about him as if apprehensive lest he might find some one waiting for him there. When he discovered that the room was indeed vacant, and apparently just as he had left it, Carew saw him heave a sigh that spelled relief. From which fact the watching detective knew that Doncaster's nerves were almost on the point of giving way under some sort of mental strain.

Did he know anything about the murder in the Carbodie apartment? Was it in some manner connected with the presence there of that knotted rope, by means of which one so clever and bold as this man could even drop down to the open window in Philip Carbodie's room, and enter at will?

That was the point which Carew meant to clear up without delay; and he only held back in order to watch his intended victim a little longer, under the impression that he might discover further incriminating evidence of guilt in the other's behavior.

But the denouement was fated to come about even more rapidly than Carew anticipated. Doncaster had locked his door after him. He walked around the room two or three times, with the restless actions of a tiger pacing back and forth in his cage. Then he smote one clenched hand in the palm of the other, with an air of finality, as though his mind had been made up; after which he strode straight toward the connecting door.

Carew understood all about his anxiety. The man undoubtedly had that incriminating rope in mind, and meant to get rid of it in some fashion. That indicated a near panic, a fear lest the officers of justice might through just such evidence convict him for complicity in some sort of crime. It seemed to exactly dovetail with the program which the astute detective had apparently marked out, as likely to be pursued by Doncaster.

When the other had swung the door wide open and saw that grim figure standing there just beyond, in spite of his nerve he experienced a terrible shock. Possibly even then he might have collected his wits and tried to put on a bold face, carrying out the character he had assumed, but Carew did not give him a chance to recover from the cruel blow.

"Good morning, Basil!" the detective said briskly; "it's been some little time since we ran across one another, hasn't it? I see you're still at your old tricks, under the impression that the world owes you a living, which it's

up to you to collect. I thought I recognized a few of your pet trade-marks about here, though you have certainly taken clever means to hide the trail. But I fancy you're pretty near the end of your rope, Basil, my boy!"

At the mention of that word "rope," Doncaster quailed. He could be seen to shrink as from a blow, showing what was on his mind at the moment he started to enter the other room. Finding his breath, he gave a short laugh which had not a particle of merriment about it, as he prepared himself to answer Carew.

"I won't say I'm glad to see you, Mr. Carew," he remarked, with a bitterness in his tones; "but if I had to be nabbed I'd sooner have you do the job than any fly-cop on the city's pay-roll. But all the same, my hands are clean of anything new. I confess that I came here meaning to make a big haul; but circumstances were against me."

He shuddered when saying this, a fact the other was quick to notice and seize upon. Fixing the crook with his wonderful eye, the detective went on to say:

"You've managed to get yourself mixed up in a pretty serious scrape this time, Basil King; and if you understand what's good for you an honest confession is the only thing that may keep you from the electric chair. You know at this minute there has been a fearful crime committed in the Oriental during last night, and that down on the second floor below this an old man, reputed to be very wealthy, lies on the floor, weltering in his blood!"

Doncaster nodded his head, and burst out eagerly, saying:

"Mr. Carew, I confess that I do know what you say, but as Heaven is my witness I have never in all my life put a foot inside of the Carbodie rooms—my hand is innocent of that deed, I swear it to you!"

"Then how do you know about it unless you looked in at the open window, making use of that fine knotted rope you have lying on the shelf of the closet in the next room?"

"I knew that accursed rope would be my ruin," almost groaned the other, now white of face, and looking dreadfully troubled, though trying hard to retain his nerve, which was so badly shaken. "That was the only thing to tempt me to come back here when I went out. My mistake was in not taking it away with me, and destroying it. I'm willing to make a clean breast of my game, Mr. Carew. Perhaps you will send me up again for planning a robbery, but even that wouldn't be anything like the chair. I've always had a horror of that, you must know. Ask me what questions you see fit, and I'll give you the truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me! I'm in a tough corner, and as you say, I realize that only being frank can save me."

Tarbox, standing in the connecting doorway, watched and listened as though entranced. He knew of old the clever ways of this remarkable hunter of criminal men; and since he no longer had any reason to fear the exercise of Carew's powers he could even enjoy being a witness to his worming-out process, by means of which he was accustomed to learning the very secrets lodged in the hearts of those who were on the grill.

"Sit down, Basil," said the detective, not unkindly, for he realized that the other was trembling like an aspen leaf, and must be feeling exceedingly weak. "Now, first of all, tell me what you saw when, sliding down your knotted rope, you stared in at that window as you prepared to enter; and be sure, my man, that you do not alter a jot or tittle of the bare truth, for any attempt on your part at subterfuge will certainly recoil on your own head."

CHAPTER FIVE

AT DEAD OF NIGHT

THE man who had been masquerading in the character of Alan Doncaster, and playing one of his most daring games, seemed utterly crushed. He was known to possess quite a reputation for nerve, but apparently it had reached its limit on this occasion. Close intimacy with the shadow of the electric chair is apt to make the boldest heart weaken; and he displayed a readiness to acquiesce in everything the detective required of him.

"It was just this way, Mr. Carew," he began. "I hatched up this game without any assistance from any one. I learned all about Mr. Philip Carbodie, and had reason to believe that if I could only manage to crack his crib here the loot would be enough to pay for any chances I'd have to take, many times over.

"Well, you can guess what the particulars of my scheme were from the fact that I waited a long time until an apartment above his became vacant, when I moved in. Of course I would have preferred a whole lot to have secured the one right above him; but then what did two stories amount to with a fellow who used at one time to be a steeple-jack, with a reputation second to none for using a rope?

"I waited last night until that little windstorm had passed by, because I just didn't fancy hanging out there in such a blow; and then the howl of the storm was likely to keep the old gentleman awake, too, I reasoned. When all seemed clear, along about two in the morning, I got ready to slip down there, and if that obliging window stood open, which I understood it was his habit to invariably allow, as he liked fresh air, I meant to enter, use the dip on him from my little chloroform bottle, and then gather the stuff from his safe and pockets, as well as securing those fine diamonds he sports.

"Well, when I got below the next floor down I was surprised to discover that there was a bright light in one of his rooms. That made me begin to think I'd have all my work for nothing, since Mr. Carbodie was perhaps sitting up reading, having been bothered by the windstorm.

"Still, having come that far I concluded I'd see it through, and have a look-in, anyhow, while about it. Of course I had it all mapped out how I meant to proceed. There's a mighty convenient little ledge about five feet under each line of windows, which, as I expected, turned out to be just the right kind of support for my feet. By moving along a yard or so I could look in at that particular window; and if given the chance it wouldn't take me ten seconds to get over the sill.

"Carew, I looked. First off I didn't see a sign of Mr. Carbodie, and I was just deciding that he'd gone to bed again, forgetting to switch off the electricity, when all at once I happened to look down toward the floor. Then I got a nasty shock, I tell you, for I saw a figure sprawled there with both arms outstretched; and in plain sight I could glimpse a red spot on the rug that was blood, I felt dead sure.

"That settled it for me, I tell you. I climbed up that rope like a monkey, and went to bed, knowing my big game was busted for keeps. Fate had stepped in and cheated me of my expected swag. I didn't sleep much, let me tell you, Carew; things began to crowd into my brain, and I seemed to get cold feet thinking of Sing Sing and that chair. I understood that by my actions last night I'd drawn suspicion upon myself; and while as innocent as a babe, all the same I might pay the penalty for another man's crime.

"So this morning I was up early and out. My first thought was to make a swift get-away. Then after eating my breakfast I suddenly remembered I'd left that accursed rope up here. I knew that if any fly-cop found it, there would be an attempt to put the job on me; and at any risk I must come back after the thing. That's all I know, Mr. Carew; and if you put me through the third degree you can't squeeze out another drop of information. My hands are clean of that business; and I'll swear to that with my last breath."

Carew believed him, somehow or other. He seemed to feel that the ultimate solution of the mystery concerning the tragic taking-off of Philip Carbodie did not lie in the hands of Basil King. Nevertheless the other might be able to add to the stock of information already in the possession of the detective, and accordingly Carew proceeded to ask further important questions, calculated to place the time of the tragedy.

"You say this was about two in the morning when you looked in at the open window of Carbodie; is that correct, Basil?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir, it was, and I know it because of several things," came the ready reply. "First the storm had passed over and the air was pretty quiet again; and then I remember looking at my watch just before I swung over the sill of my darkened room. You might call it five minutes after two, Mr. Carew, and it would be mighty close to the time."

"All right, then, we'll let that pass," the detective told him. "Now, when you were passing down can you remember whether you gripped the ledge of the window just below your starting place?"

"Why, yes, I believe I did lay my hands on the stone window-sill to steady myself, Carew; do you mean you discovered signs of finger-prints there?"

"Never mind what I discovered," Carew went on to say sternly. "You will be surprised when I tell you that it was a supposed robbery in that identical apartment which was the cause of my old friend Tarbox here sending for me so early this morning; and then by merest accident we discovered that a dreadful tragedy had also come about in the Oriental during last night."

The man who had been calling himself Alan Doncaster threw up his hands with a gesture of dismay on hearing this startling information.

"You've got me, going and coming, this time, Mr. Carew, it seems like," he managed to say, dolefully enough. "If I'm lucky enough to skip one charge the other is bound to floor me. Well, it's no use of my saying anything more; the game's running against me, and I've just got to take my medicine, that's all. Hard luck, Mr. Carew, shouldering some other bilk's job, and him getting off scot-free."

"Don't concern yourself about that part of it, Basil," the detective went on to remark complacently enough; "I expect to get busy on both these affairs, and learn the true facts. But with such grave charges hanging over your head I don't think it would be wise for me to let you run loose around town. You might take a notion to skip out, even knowing that such an act would make things look doubly bad for you. Yes, I'll have to keep you held at headquarters under a nominal charge until I probe deeper into this matter."

A shrug of the other's shoulders told that he anticipated such a fate, and was ready to bow to the inevitable.

"Nothing I can do will help me, I plainly see, Mr. Carew," he observed, philosophically, "and so I'll go with you as quietly as a lamb. Fact is I'm all broken up just now. The shock of discovering that man lying there has got on my nerves. Why, I keep seeing his white face, and the red mark on his forehead where he'd been struck. Whoever did that job must have hit as hard as flint, let me tell you, Carew."

The detective made no answer, but the ghost of a smile flitted athwart his face. Perhaps he remembered just then how other circumstantial evidence pointed to the last person known to have seen Mr. Philip Carbodie alive and in the flesh was a mere slip of a girl, hardly more than a child in stature, and supposed to be anything but athletic. And to imagine that she could be responsible for that terrible deed was bordering on the impossible, or at least the improbable.

"Come with me, Basil, and I'll see that you are taken care of," he announced. "I'll lodge a general complaint that will hold you until I have an opportunity to clear away some of these cobwebs that obscure the truth here. John, see that no one enters any of these three apartments while I am absent. I may take advantage of being out to find your little Molly, and ask a few questions in that quarter; also to look up a friend of mine who has been quite intimate with young Hubert Carbodie."

So Carew departed. The last thing he saw of Tarbox as he and Doncaster stepped into the elevator-cage, the superintendent was locking the door of the apartment lately occupied by the man now under arrest.

CHAPTER SIX

THE WHIP-LASH OF NECESSITY

IT did not take long to make sure that the so-called Doncaster was put behind the bars. Carew lodged a complaint against him that of course the captain of the precinct understood was only intended to hold him safe for a certain length of time; until some matters in which the clever crook was suspected of being interested could be examined.

Once he left the station the detective, having mapped out his plan of campaign beforehand, started in a taxi for another stag apartment house, where, as he chanced to know, a certain party had rooms. When he knocked at the door on the fifth floor, to which he had been directed by the attendant below, he heard a key turn, and then a lazy voice drawled:

"Enter, please!"

It was worth coming to see young Augustus Bottomley stare when he discovered who his early morning visitor turned out to be.

"By Jove, now, it's something out of the common that's brought you here to see me, Mr. Carew, at this time of day!" he burst out with, as he offered his hand, and drew the detective into the room; "excuse my haste, but you may notice that in my pajamas I'm hardly presentable. Fact is, I've just climbed out of bed, and hardly feel awake. But what's doing, Carew?"

"Oh, nothing that has any connection with your numerous little escapades, I want to assure you in the start, 'Gus,'" replied the other. "I need some information which I imagined you might be willing to supply; because many times you've kept telling me how eager you were to return the slight favor I once did for you.

"Slight favor, do you call it, sir?" echoed the other energetically. "If it wasn't for you I'd have been eternally disgraced and forced to get out of New York in a hurry. I'll

never forget your kindness, sir; and all because you and my late father were once good friends. Ask anything of me you wish; and if it is to betray my best chum I'd go the limit. Gratitude always was my long suit, I want you to know, sir."

"I'm interested in the movements of a friend of yours, Gus," the other explained. "To be brief, for I am in somewhat of a hurry, it is no other than Hubert Carbodie concerning of whom I want information."

Young Bottomley started, and looked uneasy, but lost no time in saying: "I'd rather it were any one else, to be candid with you, sir; but I'm not going back on my word. What is it you wish to know about Hubert?"

"For one thing, do you happen to know whether he has been recently hard pressed for funds?" asked Carew bluntly.

"Well, that condition is almost chronic with such chaps as Hubert and the rest of us," admitted the other with a dry laugh; "but just as you say, sir, I believe of late he has been up against it worse than ever before. It's bothered him a lot in the bargain; in fact, he as much as told me that unless his rich uncle came around with another check he would be in the worst hole of all his checkered experience."

"Thank you, Gus; that's all I wish to know in that direction. Now, the superintendent at the Oriental told me Hubert went out of the city yesterday, to be gone on a yachting trip with some friends for several days. Do you know anything about this?"

Bottomley burst out laughing, and with a broad grin still on his face shrugged his shoulders as he hastened to say:

"A queer sort of a yachting jaunt it must have been then, because I give you my solemn word for it Hubert was in town last night."

"You know this not by hearsay but through actual observation—is that what I am to understand, Gus?"

"Well, I saw him as plainly as I see you this minute, sir; and as a rule I can trust my eyes. Fact is, he was walking home from the theater with a certain lady, a soubrette whose stage name is La Belle Blanche, and in whom both Hubert and myself as rivals have for some time been interested enough to squander our surplus wealth on lavish presents and late suppers in return for her precious smiles.

"About what time was this, I'd like to know?" pursued Carew, undoubtedly much interested in the news, though it only corresponded with his own belief all along.

"I should say close on to midnight, sir," Bottomley told him. "Theaters had been out for some time, and I was on my way home from a little card party that failed to hold my interest when the boys cleaned me out of my last cent. It looks this gay morning as though I'll actually have to go to work in my father's office, as he says I should do, because he refuses to put up another check for me to *squander*, as he calls it."

"Excuse me for saying that I hope you find yourself reduced to that extremity, Gus, because I believe it might be the making of you. Now, where was it you chanced to glimpse your friend Hubert attending the divine Blanche home after the theater?"

"Why, you know she lives in an apartment only two blocks away from the Oriental where he has his rooms," explained the other. "It was about halfway between the two that I saw them get out of a taxi and separate. She was very angry, and even refused to say good-night to him. Poor old Hubert stood there after she left him, as if he didn't know whether to chase after her or to go to his rooms. I guessed it must be something about a present he had promised her, but which he was unable to produce, owing to the depleted condition of his pocketbook."

Again the detective may have allowed himself to remember what a spur necessity sometimes assumes; but he only went on with his direct cross-questioning.

"You didn't speak to your friend then, did you, Gus?"

"Why, no, because in the first place I didn't want him to think I'd been spying; and then again you know when a chap's been hauled over the coals by a lady with as bitter a tongue in her head as that pretty little French dancer possesses he feels rather raw about it. But I walked at some distance behind Hubert because I half suspected he might want to end his troubles in the Hudson, if ever he found enough nerve to take the jump. But he didn't."

"Where did he go?" asked Carew, in an apparently careless tone, though he waited eagerly to catch the response, which would mean so much in the way of entangling Hubert Carbodie in the meshes of the net he was trying to cast about him.

"Why, he went home, of course, sir," said Gus, as though that would be the most natural thing for Hubert to do; for at the time all this occurred he did not happen to know that young Carbodie had gone to considerable trouble in order to establish an *alibi*, and he was supposed to be away from New York on that particular night.

"You mean to the Oriental Apartments, do you not, Gus?"

"I certainly do, Mr. Carew," responded the other earnestly, seeing that the detective laid so much stress with regard to making sure of this fact.

"How are you so certain of that, I'd like to know?" pursued Carew.

"Oh, I followed him until I saw him step inside the door, sir. But, wait a minute; I remember now that he did act rather queerly, because I saw him peep in several times, and then dodge back when any one came along. The elevator hadn't stopped running, because I heard it going; but the cage must have been well on the way aloft when Hubert finally decided to enter. I rather suspected that he meant to walk up, for some reason or other."

Mr. Carew may have told himself that it was a mighty good reason; because any person who had such desperate thoughts surging through his mind as it seemed possible the nephew of Philip Carbodie nourished just then, would not wish mortal eye to see him sneak into that house.

What he had learned from Augustus Bottomley was of considerable importance in sizing up the facts. It brought young Carbodie squarely under the limelight of suspicion. Perhaps his movements were actuated by a desire to simply enter his own apartments on the sly, using a second key he had had made by some locksmith, and by judicious work there cause it to appear that a burglary had taken place. Then again they may have been caused by a motive much more sensational and thrilling, and which ended in tragedy.

All this was as yet obscured; and the detective had so far discovered no positive evidence calculated to incriminate either Hubert or another; but he believed he was on the right track, and that one series of his clues would eventually lead to the true explanation of the mystery.

So he bade Bottomley good-morning, and once more found himself in the open air, with another step of progress taken in the direction of the goal toward which he was so ambitiously heading.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FAITHFUL HEART

CAREW was a pretty busy man that morning. It was well that he had mapped out his plan of campaign systematically so as to save precious minutes of time while making progress toward the end he had in view.

Shortly after leaving Augustus Bottomley at his rooms, the detective was entering a certain gents furnishing store that at various times of the day did a rushing business. But it was not with any design of making a purchase that tempted Carew to these quarters. His object had an intimate connection with the elucidation of the mystery against which he had pitted his genius.

"Hello, Jack, my boy, still on duty I see," he remarked, clapping his hand in a genial fashion upon the shoulder of a young chap, hardly more than a well-grown boy, for he was just about twenty; and who had been bending over doing some early chore connected with the arrangement of the stock.

Jack Havens looked up with a start. Apparently he was quite nervous for so stocky a youth; and Carew could not help noticing this fact, for in his past intercourse with the boy he had never found him so disposed.

Moreover, his face was unusually long and haggard; if Jack had lain awake most of the night with a raging toothache he could hardly have appeared more woe-begone. Carew was interested immediately. It became him as a close student of human nature to take note of all such apparently minor things, since they often proved to have considerable influence in bringing about a decision.

A wan smile appeared on Jack's frank-looking countenance. There could be little doubt concerning his liking for Morgan Carew, who had often given him good advice in the past.

"I'm more than glad to see you, sir," he said warmly, as he seized the hand that was cordially extended, and squeezed it with much more than his customary enthusiasm. "Fact is, I'd been thinking of hunting you up and asking your opinion about my personal affairs, because they're kind of twisted just now, I'm sorry to say, sir."

There was no one near them just then, Carew noticed, in his customary cautious way, and so he felt justified in speaking "straight from the shoulder," though moderating his voice, as he noticed the young clerk was also doing.

"Not been losing your position, I hope, Jack?" he remarked, at the same time quite confident that such could not be the case; nor would such a catastrophe be apt to cause Jack much grief, as efficient help was in great demand, owing to certain conditions in the labor market.

"Oh, no, sir, not in the least," responded the other. "I believe they appreciate me fairly well here, though that doesn't seem to increase my wages a dollar. Sometimes I almost wish they'd drop me off the pay-roll, so I'd just *have* to find another job. I've got to make more money, Mr. Carew; it's absolutely necessary, you see, for the crisis I've been fearing so long has suddenly come on us."

"Who do you mean by *us*, Jack?"

"Why, Molly and myself, sir; I don't think I've told you about Molly, because it's been something of a secret; but we're engaged to be married; only on the ten dollars a week I'm earning here we couldn't ever get along. And then there's her poor sick mother, needing all sorts of things if she is to live—it makes me just groan to think how that old crabbed Uncle Caleb of mine won't help me out, or even have the decency to drop off, leaving me a nice little nest-egg. I never wanted money like I do now."

"Yes, sometimes these old uncles with money laid away are very unaccommodating, I understand," said Carew, chuckling at the boy's frank earnestness. "I suppose this has been worrying you more or less; I thought you looked unlike your usual self when I first saw your face."

"Well, the trouble is, sir, Molly has gone back on me," Jack managed to say, accompanying his words with a deep sigh that seemed to well up from the depths of his heart.

"What is the trouble, Jack; has she discovered that she doesn't care as much for you as she once thought?"

"Not that, sir, I'm glad to say. We're mighty fond of each other, and all my air-castles are connected with the time when she will be mine to care for. But on the way to work this morning I started earlier than usual, for I'd had a little cheering news which I wanted to share with her. So I went around to the room where she and her mother live. Then as we stood out in the hall Molly told me she had decided that all must be over between us. I argued, and refused to stand for it; but though she cried, she kept saying it must not be—that something had happened since I saw her night before last, and so she's made up her mind never to burden me with so useless a creature as herself. Think of my Molly saying that, sir, and she the brightest little sunbeam in the whole world, just the one to make a fellow happy through life."

Carew let the words sink deep in his mind. They possessed a certain significance that could not be denied. Something had happened since their parting on the second night previous, she had said. Just then there arose in Carew's memory a picture of the motionless figure sprawled out on the floor of the apartment in the Oriental, with that telltale wound in the temple where his head had come violently in contact with some sharp-edged object! Carew felt a cold chill flash over his whole frame. Then he drew a long breath, and remembered his rule never to judge a case from circumstantial evidence.

"That's hard lines on you, my boy," he told the other, who was plainly looking for words of sympathy, as he had no one else to go to when feeling the need of cheering up. "But don't let what she said make you despair. Women folks are all alike, Jack, in many respects. Something has arisen to cause Molly to feel that it's wrong to drag you down. She'll change her mind in a little while, when the sun shines again. Just act as though you meant to ignore what she said, and it'll be all right, I'm sure."

"But she was dreadfully in earnest, sir," continued the other, shaking his head dolefully. "I never saw her act that way before. Why, she actually looked *frightened*, and you'd think from the way she started whenever any one chanced to come up the stairs of the tenement that she was expecting the landlord to be ordering her to take her sick mother and get out, because of unpaid rent, or that an officer was coming to arrest her for pilfering at the hotel where she worked; when my Molly would die sooner than take a cent that didn't belong to her."

Again did Carew feel that cold sensation. Unconsciously loyal and true-hearted, Jack was piling up the agony, even when endeavoring to defend the little girl he loved so dearly. The detective felt more convinced than ever that there must be something very unusual back of all this mystery. Why should Mrs. Morton send her daughter to see the wealthy Philip Carbodie, armed with a sealed letter, which no doubt she had been instructed to never allow out of her hand until she delivered it to his keeping; for had not Tarbox told how she continued to clutch it so tenaciously when allowing him to see the address upon the envelope? And hadn't he, Carew, already determined that the charred fragments which he found in the grate in the room of the tragedy must be that same letter; burned before the eyes

of the girlish messenger perhaps, to show in his cold-blooded and cruel way that his repeated refusal of assistance to her sick mother was as immutable as the laws of the Greeks and the Persians?

"By the way, Jack," he remarked, thinking to take the mind of the boy off his troubles, temporarily at least, "what was the nature of the news you were taking to Molly this morning, if I may ask?"

Jack made a wry face.

"Perhaps I'm cold-blooded and calculating to say it, sir," he replied, "but then it means so much for all of us, Molly, her mother and myself. I wanted to tell her that old Uncle Caleb has contracted a cold, and was sneezing his head off when I saw him yesterday evening. He made me stay with him for three hours, something unusual, and even gave me a sly hint that some of these days I would perhaps not be sorry for having treated him as if he were a human being, and not simply a money-getting machine."

Carew laughed at the conceit.

"I do believe you are getting mercenary, Jack!" he exclaimed, shaking his head at the boy, who looked confused and hastened to protest.

"Oh, it isn't as bad as that, sir, I assure you. I am not wishing the old man would hurry up and take his departure from this world in which he seems of so little service to any one. But I felt encouraged, and wanted to tell Molly that if he did take to his bed, and seemed to cling to me, I was going to make bold and ask him to loan me a few hundred dollars, so I could send Molly and her poor mother out in the country, as the doctor says ought to be done."

Carew reached out and seized the boy's hand.

"Look here, Jack, why didn't you come and tell me all about this complication in your affairs?" he said. "I would have let you have what you needed, and allowed you your own time to pay it back, and, Jack, it might have saved lots of trouble for you both."

The boy winked as fast as he could to keep the tears from showing, for this additional kindness on the part of his good friends affected him very much.

"I'm mighty sorry now I didn't take my courage in both hands, and look you up, sir!" he exploded, as he continued to squeeze the hand he held in a spasmodic fashion. "It mightn't be too late yet; and I'm going around to tell Molly this very evening. Oh! I can never, never repay you for all you've done for me, Mr. Carew. Already a great load seems to be lifted off my heart, and I feel sure that when Molly learns that after all her mother can have her chance, she'll take back those cruel words."

Carew was not quite so confident about that. He knew certain things which were hidden from the other, things that possibly had to do with that sudden determination of Molly to break with her "steady." Something out of the common had undoubtedly come up since their last meeting to influence the girl and cause her to act so queerly; and Carew was grimly determined to learn its nature, or know the reason why.

In this frame of mind then he parted from Jack, and again hastened on his way, with another interview in mind.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LA BELLE BLANCHE

SOMEHOW or other Carew felt a strange disinclination to proceed to his intended interview with the girl Molly. It was not wholly on account of what he feared he might learn of a compromising nature from her, for he was fully determined to probe this thing to the bottom, no matter what happened, or who was hurt as the result of his investigation. But he seemed to want to put that supreme test off just a little longer.

So he seized upon an idea that flashed into his mind. As he was hurrying away from the store where poor disconsolate Jack labored ten hours a day for his pittance, Carew was saying to himself, rather joyously:

"It's always a good thing to run across corroborative evidence, as I've found many times. Now that flip chap Bottomley may have just imagined he saw Hubert Carbodie in New York last night. You never can trust a jealous mind; and he said he and Hubert were rivals for the favor of this M'lle Blanche, the French soubrette and dancer. It might be Hubert has been on the yacht with his friends all the while, and Bottomley, having taken a drop more than was good for him, imagined these things. Yes, I'll do it. There's no harm, and if she admits that Hubert was in her company last night I can well believe the rest."

Accordingly he changed his course, took a taxi, and was presently again in the neighborhood of the Oriental. As he passed the fashionable bachelor apartments he casually noticed that a gang of linemen seemed to be busily engaged with the electric wires which ran over the roofs of some of the nearby buildings; from which it might be assumed that the heavy wind of the preceding night had played havoc with connections, and they were endeavoring to straighten things out.

Carew always noticed everything that was going on, and he seemed to be particularly interested in watching a daring chap who had mounted a pole bearing many wires, far up above a roof, and clinging there like a simian of the tropical wilds, was deliberately doing his bit toward repairing damages.

Bottomley had said that M'lle Blanche had her sumptuous apartments in a building almost exclusively devoted to members of the theatrical profession, and within a couple of blocks of the Oriental. Of course Carew could give an easy guess where this was situated; for he made it a practice to keep his finger on the pulse of events and people in the big metropolis, so as to be posted in any emergency. That wonderful mind of his was well stocked with a fund of information upon which he could draw as occasion arose; and he had been in the Princess Apartments before now; for actors and actresses of international fame are just as apt to get into trouble as ordinary folks.

It was only nine o'clock, pretty early in fact, to expect a stage lady to be up and doing; but at any rate there was no harm in trying. Besides, Carew fancied that he might manage to influence La Belle Blanche to arise and grant him an interview. There are always levers to be had, if only they can be found, whereby even mountains may be moved; and fortune was kind enough to put such a convenient tool in his hands.

So he sent up a card to the latest favorite of the New York stage, asking that she see him for a brief time on "very important business." Down in the corner he had written the name: "Adrienne."

When the man came back he announced that the lady would see the gentleman in a few minutes—that she had only arisen, and her maid was busily engaged in arranging her hair.

Well, time was worth something to the detective just then, but he believed he could squander that amount of it, because of the hope he entertained with regard to accomplishing his end. So having been ushered into a luxurious sitting-room he sat there glancing with more or less amuse-

ment at the numerous evidences of an adoring public swamping a favorite actress with costly presents.

Then came M'lle Blanche, looking quite charming even in her hurriedly donned morning gown; for as a French woman she would never think of being seen otherwise even by her maid. She hastened toward the caller, who arose and bowed, at the same time deciding that she was certainly as captivating in private life as she had always been upon the stage.

There was an eager, almost a hungry look on her face as she held her shapely white hand out to the other.

"Good morning, M'sieu Carew," she was saying hastily; "I fear that your name is unfamiliar to me; but what you wrote down in the corner of your card has urged me to grant you an interview. What do you know concerning Adrienne?"

"Please be seated, M'lle," said Carew, handing her a chair, and then taking another himself. "In the first place, you should know that I am a detective and a close friend of Mr. Jasper Keene, whom you employed some months ago to search far and wide for a child by the name of Adrienne D'Orsay, last seen in the company of one Jean D'Orsay, who over in France had been a dissolute actor."

The eager look on her face grew apace as she kept those bright eyes, that had played havoc with so many young fellows' hearts since she took New York City by storm a year and more back, fastened on his countenance as if her anticipations had soared to lofty heights.

"Yes, and I have had only distressing news from M'sieur Keene ever since, accompanied by frequent requests for more funds with which to prosecute his search. But proceed, M'sieur, I beg of you, for something tells me you would not come here at this unearthly hour unless you were the bearer of good news. That same Jean D'Orsay was once my husband; and Adrienne is my own darling child whom he kidnapped three years ago; though perhaps you already knew these facts from M. Keene."

"I had a letter from him three days ago," pursued Carew, "in which he assured me that he was quite positive he had finally located D'Orsay and the child. The little one must have inherited your talent, M'lle, for he wrote that under another name she was turning out to be a positive child genius in motion-pictures way out in Southern California, and her father was receiving a large sum of money on account of her wonderful acting."

A look akin to rapture could be seen on the lady's face. Carew could only give a haphazard guess as to whether this sprang from joy over at last having her maternal instincts rewarded in the possible recovery of her child; or pride because little Adrienne had developed the same touch of genius that had made her mother famous in two continents.

"That is fine news you have brought me this morning, M'sieur Carew!" she explained, laying a jeweled white hand on his sleeve, and fixing her glorious eyes on his own, just as she had doubtless done with many an admirer whose costly presents she coveted, "and I thank you for it from the bottom of my heart. Did your friend write you to see me; and if so, why did you delay all this time until now?"

"I am afraid I have done something of which he may not approve," he hastened to tell her; "but in his letter he said he would not inform you until he had cleared away the last doubt. It has been wearing on my mind. I could appreciate how your mother heart must be yearning for such good news; and so I suddenly made up my mind to anticipate his letter, and make you happy. From what he wrote I am sure you will soon have your child in your arms."

She overwhelmed him with effusive thanks in her French manner. Carew having paved the way to her favor believed the time was now ripe to get in a few strokes for himself. To do so it was necessary for him to introduce the name of Hubert Carbodie, but in such a fashion as not to excite suspicion that he had any particular object in so doing.

"Though I have not met you before, M'lle, believe me when I say I have been happily entertained more than a few times by your wonderful performance upon the stage. Besides, have I not heard your praises sung again and again by one of your most ardent and devoted admirers?"

"Ah! you excite my curiosity, M'sieur," she cried, tapping him again on the arm; "it would not be fair to keep his name from me, though perhaps I myself might guess if given half a score of chances, for these men of your wonderful New York they fairly swarm about my dressing-rooms, so that my manager has had to raise a protest. Tell me which of my good friends has been talking about me to you, M'sieur."

"I can see no reason for not complying with your request, M'lle Blanche," he told her, "it was young Carbodie!"

Immediately her face took on an expression of disgust. Carew could see then that the lady of the stage had a temper, and when displeased was apt to look anything but angelic.

"Pouf!" she observed, with one of those wonderful shrugs of her pretty shoulders that only a French-born woman knows how to execute to perfection, "that simpleton! I have washed my hands of him. Hubert Carbodie is not of sufficient caliber for me to bother my mind about."

Reading between the lines Carew understood this to mean that young Carbodie, having thrown away upon her all available funds on which he could lay his hands, and being unable to give her some expensive present which she had hinted broadly she would like, must make way in her regard for some other admirer who was better placed. It was the immutable rule of the stage world—when the money fails friendship ceases with such favorites of the footlights.

He hastened to follow up his advantage, just as a boxer having made an opening delivers the finishing blow to his antagonist.

"But, M'lle, he adores you," he went on to say. "It isn't possible that you have cast him off?"

"I am tired of his company," she assured him, with a cold laugh. "I told him so plainly, and that he must not bother me any longer with his silly attentions. I am not taking boys to raise when there are so many older intelligent gentlemen in New York."

"When was it you said those cruel words to poor Hubert, may I ask, M'lle Blanche? Only yesterday he seemed so buoyant, so full of hope."

"And it was last night I declined to allow him to accompany me all the way to the door of my apartments, because he offended me by refusing a little request I had made. M'sieur, I even sprang from the car in which we were riding, and ran a whole block, after telling him that our friendship was at an end, and I hoped never to see him again. Yes, I did look back just once, and there he stood as if turned into a pillar of salt, poor little fool, staring after me. I really believed he cared; but for me, I cannot afford to waste my time on such small game, you see, M'sieur, and so it is all over between us."

CHAPTER NINE

YOUNG CARBODIE'S HOMECOMING

WHILE carrying out his design for securing this corroborative evidence from the lips of M'lle Blanche, the detective had kept his taxi waiting at the door. He knew he would have some distance to go in fulfilling his next errand, and expense must not cut any figure in his calculations when placed against the saving of time.

The disclosure of the terrible tragedy that had taken place in the luxurious apartments of Philip Carbodie on the preceding night could not be much longer delayed, or the authorities would make serious trouble for poor Tarbox, even though he, Carew, had promised to shoulder all the blame.

As he had to pass the Oriental on his way he considered that it would be wise to stop a few minutes, see the superintendent, and learn if anything new had occurred during the time that had elapsed since he started out on his several important errands.

Not finding Tarbox at the entrance as he had half expected, Carew inquired of the elevator boy as to his whereabouts, and from him extracted the information that he "guessed Mr. Tarbox was up in his own apartment on the top floor, doing some little job or other." Not wishing to change his mind, for he had thought of something he wished to say to the other, Carew told the cub to take him aloft. So a minute later he was knocking at a door which as he knew, for he had been there more than a few times before, led to the suite of several rooms where John Tarbox and his good wife lived.

As the door opened he found himself face to face with Rebecca, she who had been so instrumental in the redemption of her husband. At sight of the detective a look of relief passed over her face, which Carew noticed seemed more or less troubled.

"I want to see John for a minute, Mrs. Tarbox," he remarked, after shaking hands with her.

Carew entertained the highest regard for her womanly qualities. He knew she had been during the past tried in the furnace of anxieties and daily doubts, such as only the wife of a thief might experience, and also that she had come through it all like refined gold.

"He's up on the roof just now, Mr. Carew, but will be down any minute. Please have a chair and wait for him; I am sure he'll be more than glad to see you. We can never forget what a good friend you've been to us in the past, sir."

"Please don't mention it, Rebecca. What little I have been able to do for you has given me more pleasure than I could tell you. But have you been sick lately? You look wan and tired. John should see that you take more recreation, now that he can afford it. At least go to the movies, and enjoy yourself."

She shuddered as she tried to explain.

"We went once, sir, and as it happened the play was one that brought the terrible past back to us so vividly that I've not had the heart to try it again. The one thing I pray for every day is that I may forget. No, I have not been sick at all, sir, but the anxiety has come back again, the dull pain down in my heart."

He looked at her more closely. Yes, in her eyes could be detected that same haunting expression bordering on fear that he had hoped had been dispelled forever, when the new life opened up before her, and John became a respected member of society, his identity unknown to those with whom they now associated.

"What has happened?" he demanded, at the same time noticing how Rebecca kept glancing around, as though fearful lest her husband come in and overhear what she was saying.

She sighed heavily and wrung her hands.

"Oh, sir, they're after him again!" she exclaimed.

"What do you mean by that? Have the fly-cops been here? Have they learned who John is? Well, don't worry, Rebecca, I can fix it all right. In fact, even if you should have to give up this job I know of a fine opening where John can manage a big stock farm, and the gentleman will know all about him in the start. In fact, I've already been speaking about a certain couple I knew, and telling my friend that I'd put it up to you if you cared to entertain the splendid proposition he was ready to make you."

"What a friend you are to us, Mr. Carew!" she cried. "Please induce John to accept this chance; it will take him away from temptation, and may save him a second time. For, sir, although he does not know that I saw him taking a party through the building the other day, I recognized the man as one of his old cronies, who used to visit us, and induce John to take part in many a night raid. And I am terribly afraid that he is tempting him now to go back to his old life, perhaps threatening to betray him to the police if he refuses, and have them hound him as an ex-convict."

The cat was out of the bag! Carew smiled in a reassuring way as he hastened to give the poor woman comfort.

"Perhaps I could mention the name of the party you saw," he told her. "Was it Jim Rud?"

"Then you have seen him hanging around this building, Mr. Carew, perhaps even laying some bold scheme for robbing our tenants it may be, and trying to force John to join him in the wicked game?"

"No, I haven't run across Jim for many a day, though I expect to before much more time passes," he explained. "The fact is, John told me all about how he had been approached by this slick scoundrel, who was using threats as you suspected, in trying to coax your husband back to the old life; but John assured me he would sooner die than yield, no matter what came of it."

Tears welled up in her eyes at hearing this. Undoubtedly a great load had been taken from her faithful heart. Doubts that had oppressed her took hasty flight. She seized and wrung Carew's hand, and then hearing footsteps approaching hastened away, not wishing to let John see how visibly she had been shaken.

Tarbox looked surprised to find the detective waiting for him. He showed that he still felt very anxious concerning his own situation. With a burglary and a murder occurring in the building over which he had been placed in charge, and on the same night, too, affairs certainly did look rather complicated for the superintendent, especially since he had once been an inmate of Sing Sing himself; though a stranger to his former ways of living these days. The members of the police force as a rule attach very little credence to such reformations; their motto being "once a thief, always a thief"; and John Tarbox of course was fully aware of this deep-rooted prejudice.

"I'm glad you've got back, sir," the superintendent observed. "I suppose it's only an hour, perhaps less, since you left, but it's seemed three times that long to me. I'm keyed up to top-notch tension, all right."

"But I'm not through with my visiting yet, John," the detective warned him. "I was just passing and thought to step in so as to learn if any new complications had arisen. Your wife told me you had gone up on the roof, and so I've waited here."

"Why, it seems that the wind played all sorts of tricks

with the electric light wires, and the linemen have been kept busy this morning hunting for trouble. One man said complaints had kept pouring in from the time of the storm up to daylight, and that they were finding where the wires had crossed, and played havoc with insulations. But you asked me if there had anything new happened since you went away, sir. Young Mr. Carbodie has come back!"

"Is that so?" ejaculated Carew, apparently not so very much surprised at the intelligence. "Of course he knows that his apartment was entered and robbed last night?"

"Oh, yes, sir, he's in there now, also a gentleman he brought home with him, a man he explained was a lawyer. They are taking stock, so as to find out the extent of his loss."

"He was greatly excited, of course, as any one would naturally be on receiving such a staggering blow?" continued Carew, with a whimsical touch of satire in his tone, which possibly Tarbox failed to catch.

"Tremendously so, sir," the superintendent admitted. "He declared that he would be ruined, because he had valuables belonging to a friend in his safe, which were missing, along with some money of his own. He was for calling in the police at once, and having them take hold of the case; but I managed to convince him there might be a better chance to recover his lost property if as little noise was made over the affair as possible. But it was mighty hard for me to stand there and talk with that young fellow, knowing as I did that in the apartment just below his uncle lay dead upon the floor, with the finger of suspicion even pointing, it might be, at him as the assassin."

Carew reflected.

He hoped this new complication would not affect his plans to any appreciable extent. Any undue haste in bringing the authorities upon the scene was apt to dislocate his campaign. He must use no more time in seeing Molly Morton and her mother, so as to learn the meaning of the girl's visit to Carbodie. It must indeed be something desperate that could have influenced Mrs. Morton to allow her daughter to venture forth at that time of night to appeal to the wealthy clubman and ex-banker for assistance. He seemed to feel that the kernel of the nut would be found in such an explanation; even though it failed to remove the shadow of suspicion that rested on the head of the girl.

"You told him there was already a detective working on the case, with some chance of finding the thief and recovering the stolen goods, didn't you, John?" he asked the other.

"Yes, sir, that's about what I said. He looked a bit puzzled, and then said he'd wait a while to collect his wits, which of course were somewhat rattled by his great loss. The lawyer, too, advised his going slow, saying it would be folly to publish the news in the papers because they would make a great sensation out of it. But he's that erratic in his way, sir, I wouldn't put it past him to do anything that happened to come into his mind."

"All the same, John, I fancy Hubert will be guided by the advice of his lawyer friend, whom I suspect he influenced to come to his apartment with him so as to be a witness to the confused state he would find things in, with the safe standing open and looted. It is a clever dodge to have a reliable witness to testify in court that everything tallies with your description of the happening. The return of young Mr. Carbodie then was the only event worth mentioning that's come along since I left, you say?"

"Why, yes, sir, the only thing of consequence," replied Tarbox without hesitation.

"But was there anything else came about?" persisted the detective. "I am particular about asking, for the simple reason that an event which you might accept as unimportant would perhaps suggest something vastly different to my mind."

"Why, it was Doctor Careyford, sir," the superintendent told him.

"I recognize the name as belonging to one of the best-known medical men in New York to-day, if it is Dr. Alonzo Careyford you mean. Why should he call the Oriental Apartments, John?"

"You see, sir, he is, or rather was, Philip Carbodie's physician," explained Tarbox; at which apparently innocent remark Carew might have been noticed to raise those expressive eyebrows of his, as though the statement interested him considerably.

"Indeed, and was his call in regard to Mr. Carbodie?"

"Just that, sir, and nothing else," replied the other. "He seemed to be provoked because he could not get any reply to his repeated ringing of the telephone bell in the gentleman's private apartment. You see, we have a system installed here that allows the telephone operator to connect the calling party with the room they are asking for, so they can talk direct. Doctor Careyford had been so connected, but he said he could not get any answer to his continual calls."

"Naturally so," observed Carew dryly; "since the ears he expected to hear his summons have been closed hermetically to all earthly sounds forever, as we chance to know. What did you tell him, John?"

"Why, sir, it staggered me a bit at first, and I hardly knew what to say. I don't believe I ever had such a queer experience before. Of course I knew I mustn't tell him that Mr. Carbodie was dead, for you warned me against that. So I managed to blurt out that perhaps the gentleman was still asleep."

"Yes, and what did the old doctor say to that?" continued Carew, showing a growing interest in what the other was telling him.

"At first he was provoked, I imagined, sir, from the way he grunted. Then he told me he had arranged with Mr. Carbodie late last night to get him on the wire at eighty-thirty sharp this morning, so as to find out what effect the medicine had on him which he told the gentleman to take when they had that chat."

"You don't mean that the doctor came here to the Oriental to see him, do you?" flashed the detective.

"Oh, no, sir, he talked with him over the phone; though he also said the service was wretched, owing perhaps to so much electricity in the air, with that storm coming on."

Quick as a flash Carew went on to ask another question, the importance of which Tarbox little guessed.

"Did the doctor say at what *time* this talk over the wire took place, John? Think hard now and try to remember."

"No, sir, he did not, only casually mentioning the approaching storm, so it must have been before the big blow. It was just as well he managed his talking when he did, because telephones were temporarily at a discount while the wind howled as it did through the streets here. I never heard a worse noise, I give you my word."

"And finally Doctor Caryford said what?" Carew next asked.

"That after all he need not be surprised, because the sedative which he had advised Mr. Carbodie to take was likely to make him sleep—that was what it had been pre-

scribed for, he as much as said; though he did mention something about prancing nerves, and all that, as though Mr. Carbodie had complained about being all broken up."

The detective mused.

Two minutes later he turned again to the superintendent.

"You told me once before, John, but I'd like to have you repeat it so I can feel I'm making no mistake. At what time did you see little Molly pass out of the door of the Oriental, looking so distressed?"

"Exactly ten minutes after twelve, sir. I remember because I looked at my watch in answer to a question from the elevator boy, who wished to quit."

Carew nodded his head several times. He seemed to be lost in reflection.

CHAPTER TEN

TAKING THE BULL BY THE HORNS

"ALL right, John, and thank you for what you have told me," Carew presently remarked, with a satisfied look on his face. "I believe I'm beginning to get a grip at last on the solution of this puzzling mystery."

Tarbox looked as though on his part affairs might still be wrapped in the same perplexity that they had been when first he gazed upon that dreadful spectacle of the wealthy ex-banker lying there a corpse on the floor of his apartment. But at least the first thought to which John gave utterance did his heart credit.

"Then I hope, sir, that it will clear that poor little girl from all suspicion," he said eagerly, "because, no matter how black things seem for her I never could force myself to believe she could be guilty of so foul a crime."

"Leave it all to me, John, and I shall hope to satisfy you. And now perhaps I ought to be going because I want to see Molly for myself, and her mother as well."

They walked toward the exit, and just then a bell rang violently. Tarbox stepped toward a house phone that was evidently used whenever the tenants desired to talk with the superintendent. Carew waited, impelled by some intuition that possibly the hurried call might have some connection with the case in hand.

That he had guessed truly he decided when Tarbox came toward him again. The face of the other was clouded over, as though some fresh threat of trouble had descended upon his shoulders.

"He declares he won't wait any longer, sir!" was his first remark as he joined the detective.

"Are you referring to Mr. Hubert now?" asked Carew.

"Yes, sir. He seems to be very much excited, and says he has stood this thing long enough; that when a gentleman comes home unexpectedly, sooner than he intended, because his yachting party fell through, and finds that during his absence his apartments have been looted of everything of value, his safe broken open, and even the property of a confiding friend taken, it is his privilege and duty to call up Police Headquarters, and make a formal complaint."

"'Confiding friend' sounds pretty good to me, John, with the suspicions I am entertaining toward Mr. Hubert at this moment; but we'll let it pass. He's playing his game, of course, and this indignation is a part of it. Besides, he must throw dust in the eyes of that lawyer he brought home with him. But what does he demand of you, John?"

"That I come up to his damaged apartment and tell him everything I know, and just how I came to send for a detective without letting the police captain of this precinct know about the burglary first. I suppose, sir, I'll have to go, though to tell you the truth I hardly know how to answer him, except that you were a mighty good friend of mine, and somehow I thought of you first."

"I'll save you all the trouble, John!" snapped the detective. "You stay down here where you are, and let me see Mr. Hubert. He must be kept silent, for if he blurts this thing out he'll spill all the beans in the fire, and make no end of trouble—for the girl, Molly, for you, yes, and give me additional bother in the bargain."

"Thank you, sir, you've relieved my mind more than I can tell you," said Tarbox, breathing freely again, as he saw Carew step toward the elevator entrance.

Landed on the floor where young Carbodie had his apartments, Carew quickly reached the door, which he found slightly ajar. He caught the sound of voices within, and could even glimpse some one walking nervously up and down the wrecked apartment; while another man was sitting in an easy-chair, with one leg thrown over the other, and smoking a big fat cigar.

Of course the excited party was Mr. Hubert, making out to be greatly worked up over his severe losses, and the shock coming to his system when he should be compelled to tell his "confiding friend" how a wretched Fate had stepped in and deprived them both of their valuables. The man in the chair was the lawyer friend, possibly enjoying the whole affair very much, and it might be with a slight suspicion as to the true inwardness of it, if he knew human nature at all.

"Something has got to be done, and that's all there is to it," the walking inmate of the room was saying angrily. "I'm the party most interested, and I decline to let an unknown detective run things as he sees fit. I'll give Tarbox a piece of my mind, and then call up the police. I've got a good notion to do it even before he comes up."

As he said this he suddenly seized the receiver from the hook. Carew waited no longer but entered the room.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you, Mr. Carbodie!" he remarked with cutting emphasis.

The young man turned and stared at him.

"Who might you be, sir?" he asked, with a perceptible quiver to his voice, as though he might be playing a pretty desperate game, and the consciousness of the presence of this man with those penetrating eyes gave him a sudden chill of apprehension.

"My name is Morgan Carew, sir. I am a detective, and a friend of Tarbox. He called me in for consultation, which was most proper, as soon as he discovered that your apartment had been entered and plundered. I have already made several startling discoveries, and hope to learn just where your property has gone, if given a little time. Should you call up Headquarters, which I admit you have a perfect right to do, it would interfere with my plans, and might result in a miscarriage of justice."

Young Carbodie stood there holding the receiver in his hand. Carew noted the fact that he was trembling from some cause or other. Mingled emotions chased each other across his agitated face; but he seemed to draw himself together, and with a quick glance toward the lawyer, who was puffing calmly at his cigar, and taking it all in as though he enjoyed it, Hubert presently went on to say:

"I didn't employ you on the job, sir. I don't even remember of ever hearing your name before. It seems like a lot of assurance for you to ask me to sit down and wait until you play your game. I prefer to let the proper officials take charge here. The captain of the precinct is a

personal friend of mine, and I prefer to have him do the investigating. I suppose Tarbox thought he was acting right in sending for you; but he should have gone to the captain with his story. Now, I shall do as I intended, and inform the police."

"Just a minute, Mr. Carbodie," said Carew softly yet with the ring of steel in his voice. "Before you commit yourself I'd like to have a few words with you in private. Would you oblige me, sir, by stepping into the other room. If I do not convince you of my point in two minutes you are at liberty to call up the captain, and ask him around. But I think it would be to your advantage, indeed I am positive of it, to oblige me."

Hubert looked again into those wonderful eyes. Perhaps he saw something there that chilled his guilty heart. He gave a nervous little laugh, but all the same he hung up the receiver. Carew had won his point, and the observing lawyer smiled, as though certain suspicions which he had before secretly entertained were now strengthened.

"Oh, very well, I'm the most obliging fellow going, which accounts for my being a target for loans from my friends all along," said Hubert, carelessly. "Phelan, you'll excuse me for a minute or two, won't you? This party has aroused my curiosity, for I'd certainly like to recover what has been stolen, if it lies in any one's power to do it. But I imagine his reasoning won't amount to a pinch of snuff. Step in there then, Mr. Carew, I believe you said your name was."

His manner was indifferent, but nevertheless it amused Carew to notice how very particular young Carbodie was about carefully closing the connecting door between the two rooms; and at the same time moving to some distance from it, as though he feared that his lawyer friend might not be above trying to overhear what passed between them.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FINGER OF SUSPICION

"NOW, what is it you wish to tell me, sir?"

Carew knew from the manner of the other that Hubert must have begun to suspect something of the truth concerning his connection with the supposed burglary of the safe, and the disappearance of the money it had contained. His first plan was to try to convince the young fellow that he was standing on a precarious footing, and might have cause to rue his action did he force his, Carew's, hand.

"As I said before, Mr. Carbodie, I've been making a little investigation since Tarbox called me in. This has caused me to interview several people whom you chance to know. One of these is your good friend and pal, Bottomley!"

"Oh, is that so?" he went on to say flippantly; "and what could Gus have to tell you that might throw the slightest light on this abominable affair at my apartments, sir?"

"For one thing he assured me that he had seen you here in the city last night, when according to your program you were supposed to be off with a yachting party—at least that was what you told Tarbox when you were so particular as to confide the key to your room to his care; just as though locksmiths could not duplicate such trifling things on request."

Hubert turned a bit pale. He could not look into those eyes confronting him, but nevertheless showed a brazen front as he went on to say stubbornly:

"Oh, I admit that much, sir; I learned after going that the yachting trip was off, but returning to the city made up my mind I wouldn't go back to my apartments during the night. Where I was is my own affair, though I can prove my statement if it comes to that."

"Perhaps you will be asked to do so before we are done with this business, Mr. Carbodie," the detective told him. "I am glad to hear you admit that you were in town; but for that matter I had proved that beyond a shadow of doubt. This morning I had the pleasure of seeing another friend of yours, and learning that what Bottomley told me he had seen with his own eyes was absolutely true—that she had parted from you within a very short time of midnight, parted in anger, she said, I might add."

"You—mean—La Belle Blanche?" muttered Hubert, plainly staggered by the many blows Carew was raining on him.

"The charming soubrette for whose smiles you and Bottomley have been rivaling each other in your expenditures, until both of you are dead broke. Another thing that I learned was that after parting from the lady, when she flounced from the car and declined to let you see her to her apartments, you headed for the Oriental here, and were seen to enter, after waiting until the elevator had gone up with a late arrival, as if you meant to use the stairway."

Hubert gave a short laugh that however had no trace of merriment about it.

"You are trying to hatch up a lovely little game against me, I can see, Mr. Carew," he sneered, "but it won't work, if you think I'll try to buy you off. I defy you or any one else to prove anything against me. And I'm going to show you how little I care for such base insinuations by stepping into the other room and calling up my friend, the captain of the precinct. He will stand by me, and find the real criminal who robbed my safe."

He even made a little movement as though about to put his threat into execution, but Carew stepped between the connecting door and the excited young man.

"You would bitterly repent it if you did, sir," he said suggestively. "I have not told you *all;* you will, I feel sure, change your mind after you hear what else I have to say; and agree with me that it would be better to give me the single hour I shall need to clear up this terrible mystery of the tragedy!"

"What's that you're saying now, sir?" gasped Hubert. "That's a pretty strong word to apply to a simple robbery, where my safe was the only thing injured. I'd trouble you to explain your meaning, Mr. Carew."

He no longer acted as though impelled to rush things, and put his vague threat into execution. Indeed, his eyes were glued on the face of his companion, with a brooding look of alarm in their depths; as if he somehow sensed the coming blow, though unable to fully grasp its full nature.

Carew was studying him intently. It was at just such a crisis as he well knew that the bars are apt to be let down, and the truth be disclosed back of the mask. Young Carbodie was exceedingly worried because of his possible exposure in connection with the supposed burglary of his safe; but Carew failed to detect the state of *panic* that must come upon him if he had been guilty of murder, and his queer actions of the preceding night were in danger of being blazoned to the public in the daily prints.

"When I used that word tragedy, Mr. Carbodie, I did so advisedly," continued the detective calmly. "That is the only name which would cover the violent taking of a human life."

"Go on," urged the other hoarsely, when Carew pur-

posely stopped speaking; "tell me what you mean. Has there been such a thing happen in this building? Who is dead, and how did he die, sir? Of course you've excited my curiosity by saying that, though I don't see how it should interest me particularly."

"You will understand the significance of it all, Mr. Carbodie, when I say it is known that for some years you have received a certain allowance from your uncle, Mr. Philip Carbodie; and that it is believed you would be his heir when he passed away. That, and your strange actions of last night are apt to make you some trouble, I fear."

"Good heavens! do you mean my uncle—is dead?" exclaimed Hubert, his face turning ashen, and his eyes filling with horror.

"That is just what I mean," Carew assured him. "After Tarbox and myself had looked around your rooms here, and I made several little discoveries that interested me more or less, I asked him to take me down to the apartment directly below yours, for the occupant might have heard some sort of suggestive sounds during the night, when the burglars were throwing your things all about with such abandon, and could give me a clue as to the time it took place.

"Not receiving any answer to his repeated knocks, I insisted that Tarbox open the door with his pass-key, which he did without any trouble. The light was on at full blast as we entered, showing that it had not been switched off; and there on the floor we found Mr. Carbodie, quite dead."

"Horrible!" gasped Hubert, following every word with bated breath and staring eyes.

"He had come to his end through being struck on the temple a most violent blow, for there was an ugly wound, and he had bled considerably. Upon the floor we found a heavy paper-weight made of some wonderful species of crystal which Tarbox told me your uncle had brought from a foreign land, Japan he thought. Possibly you may remember that curio, Mr. Carbodie?"

"Yes, I certainly do, sir, and have often handled it," admitted the other, "but it's terrible to think that uncle should have come to his death through such an agency as that. You have given me a fierce jolt, Mr. Carew."

"Wait, don't put too much stress on that point, sir," admonished the detective; "I only said it looked as though the paper-weight *might* have been the immediate cause of that terrible wound on his head—that appearances would indicate it had been hurled in a fit of passion, and struck all too exactly; although that has yet to be proven. But the truth remains that your uncle came to his death through violence during the night; and your actions have been so, well, call it peculiar, that suspicion is very apt to be directed toward you as the natural result."

It was not at all hot in the room, but nevertheless Hubert with a quivering hand drew out a spotless handkerchief, and commenced to mop his face, as though the perspiration might be oozing forth from the pores. Sudden fright is apt to bring about such a condition. No doubt his knees began to also suddenly feel exceedingly weak, for he dropped into a chair, and looked up helplessly at his companion.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NEARING THE CRISIS

CAREW almost pitied the spendthrift when he saw him so utterly crushed. All the bravado had vanished, and young Carbodie had the look of a man who has wakened to a most unpleasant truth regarding the fruits of a reckless life, such as he had been living. The detective hoped that this might prove to be a good lesson for the boy; and that if only he came through his peril with his liberty he would mend his ways.

"What do you want me to do, Mr. Carew?" he asked, humbly enough, as though now quite ready to throw himself upon the mercy of the detective and be guided by his advice.

"Nothing except to simply remain here in your apartments for, say, another hour," he was told. "I believe I shall have finished my investigation by that time, and be ready to make a report with regard to the solution of the mystery, not of the burglary, but your uncle's sudden death."

"I give you my solemn promise not to move out of here until you tell me I may," said Hubert. "And with regard to the robbery of my safe, sir, perhaps it might be just as well to keep that quiet for the present. I may conclude to shoulder the blame and make my friend's loss good, rather than be bothered by the publicity of the thing. It's very annoying, I should think, having all those beastly reporters hanging around and asking you all sorts of silly questions. Somehow I seem to dread that more than any bother the police might make. So kindly say nothing to any one. Tell Tarbox it was only a little practical prank I was trying to play on my friend, and which this terrible tragedy down in my uncle's apartments has made me abandon."

Carew smiled.

"Just as you please, Mr. Carbodie," he remarked; "and on the whole I am of the opinion that you are acting wisely in changing your mind. There is apt to be considerable danger in playing with fire; and lots of people mightn't see any kind of a joke in what you were doing. I've even known a man who had lost quite a tidy sum through such a prank to swear out a warrant and have his careless friend arrested on the charge of embezzlement and of appropriating his money. Then you promise me to stay quietly here until my return, do I understand?"

"Yes, sir, I will," the other assured him, quite docile by now.

"You understand, do you not," continued Carew, "that any flight on your part would look like guilt. If I were in your fix I certainly couldn't be pried loose from these rooms with a crowbar."

"I'll ask my lawyer friend to skip out, and then try to stand and bear it; but you've taken all my nerve away with what you told me, Mr. Carew. I'll keep seeing my poor uncle all the time, with his head all bloody, and that cruel crystal weight lying there on the floor, as you said. Yes, I've had an awful shock, and the worst may yet be before me. If I ever get through this nasty scrape with my life and liberty, I swear it's going to be a lesson to me."

Carew was through with young Mr. Carbodie. He did not believe he could learn anything more worth while, even though he should spend time in putting him on the grill. In fact, he had discovered all he cared to know in connection with the other's movements and designs through other sources of information. When one has squeezed an orange dry the skin may be cast away without compunction. Hubert was of no further use to him in advancing his case.

Accordingly he passed into the other room. The lawyer looked at Carew as the other crossed in front of him, but did not venture to make any remark. As the detective reached the hall outside the door he glanced back and saw that already Hubert was speaking to the lawyer. Doubt-

less he was telling how he had made certain arrangements with the detective that would change all his plans, and hence it was no longer necessary for him to ask the other to remain.

Carew soon reached the lower floor of the big building, where he found Tarbox walking nervously up and down, and waiting for him.

"Has he telephoned for the police, sir?" asked the superintendent.

"No, I am glad to say he came to his senses, John, and decided to do as I asked him. That is, to remain quietly in his apartment for just one hour from now, by which time I anticipate returning, and be in a position to lift the mask of mystery that conceals the truth about the death of your tenant above-stairs."

"Then you must have thrown a scare into young Mr. Carbodie, I should say, sir," commented Tarbox, with a little grin, and at the same time a look of relief swept over his face, for he dreaded the coming of the police, with their quizzing, apt to bring out certain facts connected with his own past life such as must be exceedingly embarrassing to himself and his wife as well."

"I put him in possession of certain facts that were calculated to make him see what a terrible mess he had got himself in; with this tragedy happening on the very night of all times when he had schemed to play the part of a burglar in his own apartments. He is likely to come in for a good part of his uncle's money, you know, and the dreadful significance of these facts would not be lost sight of by the reporters and the police. Yes, he says he will get rid of that lawyer, and then just stay there; but I give you my word for it this promises to be the longest hour he ever spent in all his wild life. I'll be back before a great while. Keep guard over the door of Mr. Philip's apartments and allow no one to enter there to disturb things."

With these words he went out, leaving Tarbox to stand guard. No doubt the superintendent of the Oriental Apartments would also count that the longest sixty minutes he had known in many a day, since his mind was in a maze as to the solution of the puzzle. Turn whichever way he might he could not decide whether Doncaster were the guilty party, young Carbodie the one whose hand, urged by sudden temper, had thrown the fatal crystal paper-weight with such dreadful results, or if—and this caused Tarbox a sensation akin to horror—the girl he had allowed to go up to Mr. Carbodie's rooms with that letter from her mother had wrought the crime.

Meanwhile Carew had gone out of the building, and beckoned to the chauffeur of his taxi to approach. Then he craned his neck to look upward. Perhaps it was the open window of the Carbodie apartment that attracted his attention; or it may be Carew was idly wondering what would happen if the lineman who still clung to that cross-piece far above the roof of the neighboring building, while splicing some heavy electric-light wire that had been broken in the storm, should lose his hold and drop.

Whatever was in his mind Carew somehow did not seem to be in the least depressed. He even hummed a fragment of a popular ditty to himself as he was being carried swiftly along through the up-town streets of the great metropolis. Apparently his spirits were light; he had the air of one who saw the pleasing glow of success awaiting him ahead. And on his face might have been discovered a smile such as those who knew the detective best would tell you was always indicative of his being in sight of his goal.

Well, things had gone swiftly.

Why, as he consulted his watch he discovered that it was now only ten o'clock and it had been shortly before eight when he answered the pleading call of Tarbox that he "come over into Macedonia and help him." That was crowding a lot into a small space of time, come to think of it.

He ran over in his mind what he had accomplished in his systematic fashion—the interview with Doncaster; the investigation of the apartment where he and John had found Mr. Philip Carbodie lying dead; the chase down to where Jack Havens was employed, so as to get a few pointers from the lad; his talk with Gus Bottomley, and later on the brief call upon the charming if petted and thoroughly spoiled M'lle Blanche; while last, though far from least, came his important chat with young Hubert.

Now he was making for the humble home of Molly. She lived in an obscure section of the great city, where poverty rubs elbows with crime, no doubt; but plenty of honest folks are nevertheless compelled by stress of conditions they cannot control to endure such undesirable neighbors, and go their own ways, pretending not to see anything wrong.

Carew knew the locality like a book. He had many a time rounded up some clever rogue wanted for breaking the law, and whose people lived there in obscurity.

When he found himself on the pavement close to the tenement in question, having left his taxi to wait for him around an adjacent corner, he found himself in the midst of familiar sights such as can be run across any day in the week throughout the slum district in a big city. Just then these interested him not at all; "familiarity breeds contempt," runs the old saying, and Carew had been gazing on these or similar scenes ever since he was a boy himself, so that there was nothing novel about it all.

So he entered the building.

It was like a great many similar structures in those portions of New York where the submerged millions have their abiding place. There have been numerous modern tenements erected of recent years, up-to-date affairs where cleanliness is demanded of the occupants in return for many conveniences; but this building did not come under that particular head. The walls were grimy, the stairs out of plumb, creaking dreadfully under the weight of those who used them; and there was a generally dilapidated atmosphere about the place, as well as a constant smell of boiled cabbage and fried onions such as would hardly excite the appetite of a person accustomed to decency.

But the rents were cheap, and that was a weighty reason why most of the tenants sought refuge there; while others might consider it a haven of safety when hiding from the police. Some wag had no doubt in irony painted a name on a bit of board, which was fastened above the door of this hive of battered humanity. Carew smiled as he glanced up at it and read:

"PARADISE HALL."

Well, apparently it does not take much to constitute a paradise for some people, he must have concluded, as he touched the grimy wall before starting up the quivering stairs, and withdrew his hand, shuddering at the greasy contact. Still, Carew had before this known an angel to dwell under just such a queer roof; and he would not be surprised to find his past experience at least duplicated when he came to meet little Molly face to face, if one-half that her boy lover thought of her turned out to be true.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"THE ONLY WAY OUT"

CHILDREN were playing at the entrance, and people coming out, as well as entering, pretty much all the time. Carew stopped a slatternly looking woman who had just come down the stairs with a broken basket on her arm, no doubt on her way to some nearby push-cart street market, where she might invest her scanty money to the best advantage.

"Could you tell me on which floor a Mrs. Morton and her daughter Molly live?" he asked.

The woman looked at him keenly. Perhaps she had some good and sufficient reason for suspecting the motives of strange men who came inquiring for tenants of Paradise Hall. But Carew looked pleasantly at her, and his smile must have influenced her to give him what information she possessed.

"I don't know the name, mister, but there's a little girl lives with her old woman on the third floor, same as me. I heard her called Molly, so mebbe she's the one you're lookin' for."

Thanking her, Carew started to climb those creaking stairs. One contact with the grimy walls was quite enough for him. Reaching the specified floor he looked at the array of doors. Again fortune favored him, for one stood open, and a half-grown girl with frowsy hair and a hard look on her face stared at him.

Carew repeated his question, and was flippantly directed to the last door on the right, at which he knocked. When it was opened he saw Molly. There could not have been a greater contrast than between this tidy-looking girl and the frump with whom he had just spoken. Carew remembered what the enthusiastic Jack had said in speaking of Molly, and his first glimpse of her seemed to justify every word of it.

"Does Mrs. Morgan live here; and are you her daughter?" he asked.

The girl was white of face and wan. It was evident that she had not spent a comfortable night; indeed, Carew felt sure she had not obtained a wink of sleep. She looked at him in a half-frightened fashion, too, which Carew did not like to see, for under the circumstances it suggested the thought that Molly had been in mortal fear lest she have a visitor whose errand would be like the dropping of a bombshell in a camp.

"Yes, sir, Mrs. Morton is my mother; will you come in?" was the way she answered his inquiry, and if her voice trembled it could hardly be wondered at.

The first thing he noticed was that they must have two rooms, for this one had a kitchen-stove and a table in it, being evidently used for meals and general purposes. A door told where the sleeping chamber lay. It had been closed, doubtless by Molly herself before she answered the summons, as though she thoughtfully wished to keep her sick parent from being disturbed.

Carew was glad to note this; his particular business concerned Molly particularly, and it pleased him to find that he could converse with her alone.

"My mother is very sick, sir, and could not see you unless your business is of very great importance," the girl went on to say. "Perhaps I might answer just as well."

"I have no doubt of it, miss," he assured her, trying to cheer her up through one of his smiles, for the expression of misery on that pretty face cut him like a knife. "In fact, it was to talk a little with you that I have come here this morning."

"Yes, sir," she said simply, only that and nothing more; but the look of anxiety deepened, and into her eyes came an expression such as Carew remembered once seeing in the big innocent orbs of a deer he had shot, before it expired.

"Please sit down, and I will try to be as brief as I can, Miss Molly," he went on to say, pushing a chair forward, and taking another himself.

She did as he requested, though all her movements were strangely automatic, as if her poor brain were partly dazed through some cause; and it was his intention to discover the nature of that same condition. He had come there not to hound a poor frightened girl, but by diligent questioning discover the truth that lay at the bottom of the well.

"I happen to be acquainted with a young chap you know, Molly, Jack Havens being a particular friend of mine. I saw him this morning and he told me how queerly you acted toward him, saying that something had happened last night that would make it utterly impossible for you to ever be his wife, the one dream of his life."

Her face was no longer white, for the color had flashed across it. Into her eyes there also came a sudden light, as though the bare mention of Jack's name had thrilled her.

"Oh! sir, did he send you to see me?" she exclaimed, catching his sleeve in her quivering fingers. "But then, it can make no difference. What I told Jack must stand. I have thought it all over. We must not go on as we were. I should hate myself to become his wife, and bring disgrace and shame on his name."

There it was again. She had told Jack the same thing, and it had an ugly sound that jarred on his ears. He must evidently change his tactics, and bring another method of influence to bear upon her. When Molly learned of the death of Mr. Carbodie being discovered she must understand that her secret could no longer be held back, since the finger of suspicion already pointed toward her as the very last person who had seen the ex-banker alive.

"Please pay attention to what I am about to say, for it is of the utmost importance to you, to your mother, to Jack," he remarked, seriously now. "In the first place my name is Morgan Carew, and I follow the profession of a detective."

He watched to see if she gave a start, and turned deathly frightened at being told this; but to his relief nothing of the kind came to pass. She continued to stare at him with those big blue eyes, and all he could see in their depths was vague wonder and pain.

"I have a friend, one John Tarbox, who is the superintendent at the Oriental Apartments," he continued, and this time she did start, while a slight spasm flitted over her face. "You know him, I believe, miss?"

She nodded her head.

"He used to stop and talk with me sometimes when he was in buying his tobacco; my desk at the Mammoth where I was the public stenographer happened to be close to the cigar and news stand. Mr. Tarbox was very cheery, and I liked him."

"He called over the wire this morning, and begged me to come around to advise him," Carew explained, keeping close watch on her face. It seemed that a burglary had been committed during the night, the rooms of a young man being entered, and his safe opened."

"Oh! was that it, sir?" she breathed, as though something akin to relief had swept over her heart.

"But, strange to say," continued the detective, "as often happens, trouble didn't come singly to my friend Tarbox last night. While we were investigating the robbery we

had occasion to knock at the door of the apartment exactly below, wishing to learn whether the gentleman had heard any suspicious sounds above his head during the night. Receiving no response, even when we pounded on both doors, the superintendent managed to effect an entrance by means of his pass-key. And there upon the floor of his sitting-room we found a rigid figure, that of Mr. Philip Carbodie! He was quite dead, and had come to his end through violence!"

She gave a low cry when he purposely said this with considerable dramatic force. Her hands twisted and quivered, while her distended eyes continued to remain fixed upon the stern face of her visitor.

"It was not a very nice sight, I assure you; miss," he went on pitilessly, for it was his purpose to force her to a confession as to why she had gone to see Mr. Carbodie at that time of night, bearing a message from her sick mother; and there was only one way to accomplish his end, which was through fear of exposure. "The poor gentleman lay there just as he had fallen, for I take it death had been instantaneous. The immediate cause of the fatality lay in a severe blow which he had received on the temple. His blood stained the costly rug on which he lay. Close to him we found a heavy crystal paperweight, that had perhaps been the cause of his death—at least the most plausible supposition seems to be in that direction. Whatever his sins may have been Mr. Carbodie certainly had no opportunity to repent of them before his fate overtook him. It was very tragic, I can assure you, miss."

"Oh, how terrible!" came from between her white lips, as she continued to wring her hands helplessly, and then suddenly a dreadful thought must have seared her aching brain, for she cried out: "But why do you tell me this, sir? Oh! it can't be possible you suspect *me* of doing such a thing?"

"I am seeking information, my dear child," he said, a bit more kindly as he saw that she was close to a collapse. "You saw Mr. Carbodie late last night, didn't you?"

She nodded her head weakly in the affirmative, and an inarticulate sound welled up in her throat that might have been "yes."

"I understand that you were actually the last person on earth who spoke face to face with the poor gentleman before something happened. It is in your power, therefore to give me certain facts that may be of great value in clearing up this mystery. That is why I have come to see you this morning, Molly. I am coming as your friend, as Jack's former adviser, trying to make the ordeal as easy as possible. You would sooner or later have had to undergo a much more severe trial before detectives whose methods savor of the Third Degree style. Stop and think what it all means to those you love. The truth must come out sooner or later; it is inevitable. Why not take me into your confidence now, and let me advise, perhaps comfort you? I am sure you are in great need of a sincere friend. Come, tell me what lies behind your visit to Mr. Carbodie last night, and why you told Jack he must never think of you again. It is vitally important that I should know."

She sat there with her whole body quivering under the strain. Then as if impelled by a sudden resolution she burst into tears, and sobbing as if her heart would break, stammered:

"Oh! I do believe you mean to be our friend, Mr. Carew, for Jack has told me how you always helped him with good advice. And, sir, I am resolved to throw myself on your mercy—to confess the whole dreadful story! It is the only way out!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MOLLY'S SECRET.

APPARENTLY Carew had made his point. Molly was convinced that her secret could no longer be kept hidden in her own breast. Since tragedy had stepped in everything else must give way, and the truth come out.

The detective hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. Although he had already convinced himself that the girl could not possibly be guilty of such a heinous crime, nevertheless to hear her cry of anguish as she thus announced her intention of making a clean breast of her actions on the preceding night, gave him a wrench.

"That is all I want you to do, Molly," he told her. "I assure you I am here to save you from unnecessary pain, and your mother from additional trouble. I appreciate the fact that you have had a heavy load to bear recently, with her sick on your hands; and that you have been willing to sacrifice your comfort and everything because of your affection for that mother. It was on her account you made that strange visit to the Oriental last night, was it not?"

"Yes, sir, to try and influence Mr.—Carbodie"—Carew noticed how she hesitated when about to mention that name, as though it gave her a chill—"to do something that was only common justice. But, oh! he was so furious, and acted as though he had been drinking. He even swore, would you believe it, and at *me!* He frightened me more than I have ever been frightened in all my life before; and the worst of it was I had to come away without his promising to either grant my mother's prayer, or even offer the help I asked him for, so I could take her away to the country where she would have a chance to get well and strong again. And now you tell me there can never be another chance that he will do her justice—that he—is dead!"

She buried her face in her hands and sobbed bitterly. Carew pitied her more than words could tell. He only hoped her emotion would pass away so that she could continue to answer the questions he must ask; also that the sick woman in the other room might not hear Molly crying, and getting out of her bed, open the connecting door, to disturb them just when he had reason to believe his object was on the point of being attained.

"Try to contain yourself, Molly, my dear child," he said soothingly. "You have made a brave start toward telling me the cause of all your distress. I can see that there is a secret you dislike very much to disclose; but since things have taken this terrible turn you must not dream of holding back. No matter what it may be, Jack should know. The truth couldn't be worse to him than the uncertainty. So commence, and tell me what it was you begged Mr. Carbodie to do—what your mother should write that only seemed to further anger him?"

While he was speaking in this strain Carew was gently patting the bowed head of the girl. Perhaps his words as well as his touch inspired her with fresh confidence; at any rate she looked up, the tears glistening like diamonds in her eyes, and managed to go on speaking.

"Yes, I feel that I must tell you the whole terrible story, sir. You will then know why it is impossible that I should ever think of marrying poor dear Jack—or any other honorable man, because of the unjust way in which Mr. Philip Carbodie has treated us. My mother revealed it all to me for the first time last night when she gave me that letter to carry to him—though I just couldn't wait, but slipped away when she slept later, foolishly hoping to have good news for her in the morning."

"Yes, I understand," said Carew encouragingly, as he saw signs that Molly was near the point of another sobbing spell; "and what was it she confided to you, child?"

"That I, too, was a Carbodie, and the rich, hard-hearted gentleman of the Oriental, whom I had often seen in the hotel, even spoken to several times, *was my own father!*"

It was a staggering announcement. Carew had hardly anticipated such a denouement to his questioning. But he was making brave progress, and must probe deeper, no matter how painful the operation might prove to be for the one who was on the rack. The sooner it was over the better for all concerned.

"Of course you have surprised me very much by saying that," he told her. "Now please continue, for I am wondering, naturally enough, you can understand, why your mother should be living in want while he enjoyed every luxury wealth could give."

"Oh, it is a sad story, sir. My poor mother has been a martyr, because he accused her falsely of caring more for another man than she did him, and refused to listen to her entreaties that he give her a chance to explain. She believes he had already ceased to care for her, and sought by this means to cast her off; for he told her he possessed the only record of their marriage, and that she would never be able to prove it.

"Perhaps she was foolish and weak to believe him, sir, but her heart was very nearly broken at the time. So she went away with the small sum of money she possessed, and hid her secret from the world. All these years she has lived and worked here in the slums of New York, known only as Mrs. Alice Morton. I was born in those early days of her sorrow, and she says only for my coming she would have ended it all.

"But in our little humble way we have been very happy, my mother and I; though often I would catch her spying, without ever being able to coax her to tell me the cause. And only for fear that I might be left alone in the world now, if she were taken, influenced her to write that letter, which was a plea to Philip Carbodie to right the terrible wrong he had done in the past, and acknowledge her as his wife, for the sake of his child."

"And that was the letter you took to him last night, was it?" remarked the detective, no longer remembering that huddled figure on the Oriental rug of the fashionable apartment with a shudder, but instead allowing a feeling of righteous indignation to burn into his heart.

"Yes, sir, it was," she answered, looking him directly in the eye now. "I hoped he would feel something like compassion when he heard me say that my poor mother could not live long unless she had help; but oh, just the sound of her name seemed to make him furious; as if all the bitter past and his guilt in wronging her came up before him to condemn him."

"What did he do then—be particular to tell me exactly, because it may have a decided bearing on my conclusion, Molly?"

"He swore something dreadful, sir," she told him. "Then he crumpled the letter in his hand, and threw it angrily on the table near by; after which he ordered me to leave the room. I could not repeat what he said to me, sir, though I can never forget it while I live. To think that my mother once loved a beast like that, a man without a soul, who would leave a woman to die in poverty while he rolled in wealth. Oh! the bitterness of it all."

"But he did not venture to strike you, I should hope?" continued Carew, in order to learn whether anything had occurred likely to arouse the girl to a sudden fit of passion; for perhaps she had inherited a trace of the Carbodie temper.

"N—no," she replied, hesitatingly, "though once I feared he might, he worked himself into such a terrible passion, and grew so fiery red."

Carew noted that point. When a stout gentleman, whose blood must be unduly rich through high living, lashes himself into a fury, there is always a chance that he may a little later on have some sort of apoplectic stroke; he had known of more than a few such cases, some of which resulted fatally. Consequently he was particular to remember that Mr. Carbodie grew fiery red in the face, and possibly gasped for breath, while berating the girl, claiming to be his own daughter, for coming to see him on such a fool's errand.

"Now, listen again, Molly," he continued; "I am going to ask you another question which I hope you will be able to answer, as what you say must have considerable bearing on the solution of this mystery."

"I understand you, Mr. Carew, and I will do my best, though I have great trouble in keeping my wits about me. What is it you want to know, sir?"

"It concerns that letter—you did not fetch it away with you, I presume, Molly?"

"Oh, no, sir! I shrank back when he acted so violently; and nothing could have tempted me to go closer to him again. I was shocked, yes, and afraid of my own father, sir."

"He did not burn it while you were there in the room, did he?" Carew demanded, and was glad to see her shake her head in the negative.

"It was still there where he had thrown it, all crumpled up, when I backed to the door and went out, broken-hearted," she told him.

"On the table you mean, Molly?"

"Yes, sir, in plain sight, though I do not understand what difference that could make."

"Upon that small circumstance everything might turn, child—your future happiness, as well as that of Jack, and your mother. It might be even your liberty, or your life is involved in the fact of that letter being in evidence when you last saw Mr. Carbodie. For I know that he *did* burn it, since I found the charred ashes there in the grate, and could even decipher some of the words before the fragments went to pieces at my touch. And if Mr. Carbodie did that *after* you departed, the fact stands out plainly to proclaim you had nothing to do with the tragedy that overtook him. But then I do not depend wholly upon that evidence to clear you, and place the blame where it belongs; I have another means for proving that fact."

She looked a little brighter on hearing these cheering words; just as Carew intended should be the case. So far as extracting information from Molly went, he believed he had accomplished his mission; but nevertheless he did not feel like leaving her without further words of comfort.

"Now, you must take back the cruel words you said to poor Jack this morning, my child," he told her. "He is just the one to care for you all your life, and make you happy. You deserve some share of the world's joys, after suffering so much, you and your good mother; and you will surely break the honest fellow's heart if you dismiss him."

"But," she expostulated, "now that I know my mother's sad story, and must share the shame to which my father has doomed her, I could not think of dragging Jack down by marrying him. He is only an impetuous boy just now; and later on when he grows older and more world-wise he,

too, might regret the step, just as Philip Carbodie did. One such tragedy in the family is enough, sir, don't you think?"

"But there is small chance of such a happening in Jack's case, because he is built on a different order from your cold-calculating jealous-minded Philip. Besides, you admit that if this perplexing matter could be cleared up, so that your mother might assume her proper name of Mrs. Carbodie, and money come to her as the widow of the dead banker, you would chance it all with dear Jack, would you not?"

A wistful look overspread her face. For the moment it radiated again with all the witchery that had always marked it, just as Tarbox and the love-sick Jack had described.

"Y—es, I suppose I would have to give in to Jack under *such* conditions, Mr. Carew; but, oh! do you think there is any chance of that coming to pass?"

"Why not?" he told her boldly; "when a man of my attainments vows that he will give himself no rest day or night until it has become an accomplished fact? Even in the private papers left by Mr. Carbodie there may be something which he has neglected to destroy that would be sufficient proof in the sight of the court to substantiate your mother's claim to recognition, and obtain at least a customary widow's third of the estate. Besides, after she has talked with me, and told me all she can remember about her marriage, I shall investigate. There are sure to be records in some dusty little church, or a county building. Never fear but that it must turn out all right; and I feel certain you will yet find great happiness, all of you."

She pounced on his hand, and before he realized what she meant to do had pressed it to her lips in deepest gratitude; and, indeed, why should not her heart go out to this man who had come when she was bowed down with grief, to lift the veil and let the blessed sunlight shine upon her heavy heart.

Carew was ready to go forth. His faith had been fortified anew, and after this little talk with Molly he no longer had the least suspicion that she could be connected with the tragic taking-off of Philip Carbodie, save that circumstances had allowed her to be the last person to see him alive.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ON THE HOME STRETCH

ALTHOUGH Carew was hardly anticipating such an encounter, still he did not seem to be very much astonished when he ran across Jack Havens, just after issuing forth from the dismal old tenement where "Little Sunbeam," as Jack called Molly, had her humble abode.

The boy at least showed signs of pleasure at seeing his friend and adviser, hastening to seize upon his hand.

"Then you've been up to see Molly, sir?" he exclaimed, impetuously; "tell me, is she well, and has she changed her mind yet?"

"If you mean with regard to throwing you over, Jack, I am pleased to say I believe she has," replied Carew; "but, hold on, you mustn't bother breaking in on her yet. Give the poor child time to think it over, and *yearn* a little to see you. It's going to be all right, boy; I think I can assure you that far. Trust me to the fullest; I have taken her into confidence, and know all about it."

"But I'd just give anything to see her, Mr. Carew," pleaded Jack. "After you went away I couldn't work, and so I told Mr. Currier I'd have to go home, my head ached so; but I lied, I'm afraid, sir, because it was really my heart, you see. But oughtn't I know about this trouble, too, don't you think, sir?"

"I certainly do, Jack, and it's my full intention to confide the whole sad story to you; but not just now. Suppose you drop around and see me to-night, and I'll explain everything."

"Couldn't you say this afternoon, sir; I don't see how I'd be able to endure it until night-time? And besides, I'd want to be with Molly then."

"All right, Jack, let it be as you say. At two, then, I'll look for you. Brace yourself to hear some thrilling things, in which a burglary and a tragedy have a share; for Philip Carbodie, the banker, was found dead in his apartments this morning, having come to his end through violence. And as your Molly took an important letter from her mother to the gentleman along toward midnight last night, she was consequently the very last person to see him alive. I wished to talk with her so as to clear up certain matters that had become fogged. But everything is explained now, and I predict a happy future for you and Molly. I'll look for you later on; just now I'm very busy, as I have one more visit to make, and hope to catch the gentleman at home during his office hours. Good-by, Jack!"

Just then he became aware of the fact that his companion was paying no attention whatever to what he had been saying; but with his head thrown back was busily engaged in blowing kisses heavenward, also waving his other hand at some object he had located above. Glancing up, Carew was amused to see Molly hanging part-way out a window and also making semaphore signals that were born of her great love. She must have glanced out to note his, Carew's, departure, and thus by accident witnessed the meeting of that gentleman with another whom she recognized as her own Jack. Hence those impulsive gestures when she discovered him looking upward.

"Excuse me, Mr. Carew, but Molly says I can come up *now*, and nothing could hold me back. I'll see you, though, at two this afternoon; and if she doesn't care to tell me *everything*, why you will, I know. Thank you, sir, a thousand times, but I can't stop any longer."

Carew laughed softly to himself as he strode along toward the corner at which he had left his taxi.

"Bless the boy, he's built on the right order," he was saying. "No danger of Molly suffering like her poor mother did, through the cold-blooded selfishness of the man she married. What a human monster Philip Carbodie proved himself to be; his tragic taking-off seems very much like poetic justice in my eyes; he deserved a worse fate even than the one that overtook him; and I'm fully determined that Molly and her mother shall secure their rights, no matter what it costs in money and time."

He was soon comfortably seated in his taxi, and speeding up-town again. The end of the trail was in plain sight; Carew felt as sure of that as he had of anything in his whole checkered experience as a sleuth. At the same time he desired to carry the matter to its logical conclusion. The evidence of one man was necessary now in order to clinch the case beyond any possibility of doubt, and he was on his way to interview him.

As he passed along Carew was reviewing certain facts in his mind that had a bearing on the case, particularly as to time. This he considered a most important factor, as it nearly always is in such matters, not only with re-

gard to settling the exact minute when the tragedy occurred, but also in proving an *alibi* for some unfortunate suspect.

He had the word of Tarbox to the effect that it was just ten minutes after twelve when Molly departed dejectedly from the Oriental, after being so cruelly treated by Mr. Carbodie.

Then the crook posing under the name of Doncaster affirmed that it was close to two when he peered through that open window leading to the Carbodie apartments, and made the horrifying discovery that the only occupant was a dead man; which cooled his ardor and caused him to indefinitely postpone his intended nocturnal visit on booty bent.

Two hours very nearly lay between these extreme poles, and during that time the sudden death of Philip Carbodie occurred. What had happened in that interim? For one thing there was the severe windstorm that several people had casually mentioned when speaking to Carew about the matter. He himself knew about the gale of wind, for up where it struck him, above Harlem, there had been considerable rain in connection with the storm, so that he had found himself fairly soaked to the skin, being without protection.

And now it was to settle the important point which connected Molly's visit with the ill-fated ex-banker that Carew was making for the residence of Dr. Alonzo Careyford, who was esteemed to be one of the most renowned practicing physicians in all New York, as well as one of the most exclusive, and high-priced.

When the taxi stopped before the fine residence of the doctor, Carew noted that there was no brass sign on the door, decorating the nearby wall, as is usually the case, calling attention to the fact that a healer has his office in the building, first floor front, and can be called by whoever needs his services.

With Doctor Careyford the case was just the opposite. He was already a wealthy man, and only practised among a small and select circle. His clientele, as Carew already knew, was restricted to the very rich, sprinkled with a few old friends who would not give him up; nor had he the heart to desert them. More than that, he kept his telephone number out of the book, and it could only be obtained by special request from central "Information."

Carew calculated to stay only a brief time. He felt that he must be getting back to the scene of the tragedy, so that the authorities might be notified, and put in charge of the case. Now that he was positive there was no longer the taint of a deep mystery hanging over the death of Philip Carbodie, he could afford to efface himself from the affair, offering all the evidence he had accumulated to the coroner, to be used at his discretion at the inquest that was bound to follow.

He ran lightly up the stone steps leading to the doctor's door. His ring was answered by a colored man-servant, evidently an old and faithful retainer of the famous physician.

"I want to see Doctor Careyford for a few minutes," Carew told him. "I have no appointment with him, but this is a most important matter. I wish you to take my card to him, with a line I have written on the same; and I feel certain he must tell you to admit me. I shall wait outside until you return with the word; so please close the door."

The man realized that this was a most modest request, and taking the proffered card he disappeared. It spoke well for Carew's appearance being an asset begetting confidence, for the colored servant left the front door ajar when he set about doing his errand

Not the slightest doubt assailed the detective with regard to the outcome. He had written on his card that which he knew was calculated to excite the liveliest concern in the mind of the physician, and cause him to send his doorkeeper out in haste with an urgent message for the gentleman to enter, and join the doctor in his library. That message read:

"Mr. Philip Carbodie died last night under strange conditions, after talking with you over the phone. I would like to speak with you about it."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WHAT HAPPENED—CONCLUSION

JUST as Carew had anticipated would be the case, the colored man-servant returned in haste, as though his master might have instructed him not to let the gentleman depart under any conditions.

A minute later and the detective stood facing Doctor Careyford in the eminent physician's fine library. The elderly practitioner looked rather startled, to tell the truth. He also surveyed Carew in a puzzled fashion.

"This is strange news you are bringing me this morning, Mr. Carew," he was saying, after the man had closed the door and departed. "Please be seated, sir. I do not remember having met you before, though possibly my memory is beginning to fail me."

"No, we have never come in personal contact, Doctor," replied the other, "though, of course, I have often heard of you, and even seen you. Let me be brief, sir, as my time is limited. I am a detective, and fairly well known in my chosen sphere."

"Indeed, you add to my interest, and also to my natural concern, sir," observed the physician, "especially since your card gave me some very astounding information. I am particularly concerned, you must know, because only last night Mr. Carbodie, who was one of my most particular friends, as well as my patient, called me over the wire and I prescribed for him. But what I advised him to take was really a harmless soporific; and unless he swallowed the entire contents of the phial I had left with him, nothing at all serious could have followed, I assure you."

"I understand all that, Doctor, be assured," said Carew, wishing to relieve the mind of the other as quickly as possible, for he had an object in desiring that Doctor Careyford should be in condition to exercise his memory as faithfully as he had ever done before in all his life. "I saw the phial, plainly marked, on the table, just where he had placed it after taking the prescribed dose. It was almost full at the time, showing he could not have misunderstood your directions."

The physician looked immensely relieved, as though this assurance on the part of his caller took all onus of the calamity from his shoulders; for it happens that sometimes doctors are blamed for careless blunders on the part of their patients.

"Please tell me what happened to Mr. Carbodie, sir," he went on to say. "We have known each other for many years. I presume that I was about as intimate with him as he allowed any one to be; for he was a strangely reserved, even a cold man."

Carew had his own opinion about that, remembering what little Molly had so tearfully related about Philip Carbodie flying into a passion, just because the scroll of

his unsavory past life had been unrolled, to stab his conscience anew.

But he did not deem it wise to enter into any argument with regard to the real character of the dead man. Briefly he told the story from the time he heard Tarbox speaking to him over the wire, and begging him to come over at once so as to advise regarding what he ought to do about the robbery of Hubert Carbodie's apartments during the temporary absence of the young man from the city; and finally reaching the discovery of the tragedy that had overtaken the ex-banker.

Of course he did not tell everything, for there was no necessity that the doctor should know about Tarbox and his past; though he did bring in the clever crook who posed under the name of Doncaster, just to make a note of the time when the other looked in through Carbodie's open window, and beheld that dreadful sight.

"Now I am coming to my reason for calling upon you, Doctor Careyford," he finally announced.

"I shall be glad to assist you in any way possible, if by so doing I may be of service, and aid in fastening the perpetration of this dastardly crime upon the guilty wretch whose hand struck down my friend," the physician hastened to remark with considerable warmth.

"Wait until you have heard all I have to say, sir, before deciding on where the guilt lies," Carew warned him, with a smile. "Sometimes, as I have learned, these mysterious tragedies, the solution of which depends wholly on circumstantial evidence, take the most extraordinary twists and turns, and afford the greatest surprises. I fancy this mystery equals any with which I have ever come in contact; and yet once it has been solved it seems so simple that you will wonder that any one could be deceived."

"You are certainly arousing my curiosity considerably, Mr. Carew; and I beg of you to satisfy it with as little delay as possible."

"I shall, Doctor, depend on it. In the first place, notice that Doncaster, the thief who dropped down on his prepared rope, being an old steeple-climber before he took to burglary for a profession, swore that it was *two* o'clock when he looked in at the open window, and saw Mr. Carbodie lying there, dead to all appearances. The storm had passed, and we know that this did not happen until about half after one. Mark that point, please."

"I have, sir; please continue!" snapped the doctor, eagerly, absorbed by the direct way of talking assumed by his visitor, and his dramatic method of introducing evidence that smacked of a lawyer's style.

"With regard to the visit of the girl, whose secret I am sure you will keep for the present, Doctor, the superintendent assured me she left the building at just *ten minutes after twelve*. That is the second point to be noted. Now, we can easily assume that after she had gone Mr. Carbodie destroyed that letter, for I found the ashes in the grate, and identified it by means of my magnifying-glass; even to the name signed at the bottom, which I learned was the same as that of Mrs. Morton. His recent giving way to a violent outburst of temper had left him weak and trembling, with a possibility of a sleepless night before him. Consequently he decided to call you up, and ask whether he had not better take one of your tablets; which he proceeded to do. Now, Doctor, I sincerely hope that you distinctly remember the time of night when this call came to you; so that you could swear to it in court, if necessary; because it is of vital importance in establishing an *alibi* for Molly Morton. How about it, sir?"

Doctor Careyford smiled.

"Fortunately, sir, I am very precise about such things. I carry a little memorandum book in which it has always been my habit to jot down every such occurrence. Here it is in my pocket now. I will read what I mechanically wrote there last night, after speaking with Mr. Carbodie over the wire, and plainly recognizing his voice, which I know as well as I do my own."

He opened the small note-book, and finding the place, read:

"Talked with Philip Carbodie over the phone at *one-fifteen* this morning, getting out of bed to answer my private call. Advised taking medicine left with him to induce sleep. Made appointment to call him up at eight-thirty a. m. to-day to learn result. Curious to know—remedy stoutly recommended by Doctor Hanna as invaluable."

Carew nodded his head. He seemed fully satisfied.

"That settles it beyond any chance of dispute, Doctor. Mr. Carbodie was alive at *one-fifteen* this morning. The storm was approaching, as I believe you mentioned while talking with the superintendent of the Oriental when telling him of your appointment with your friend, and how you could not get an answer to your repeated calls. Here then is what happened, sir.

"During the storm the violence of the wind played havoc with the electric light wires, and in some place doubtless a broken wire, heavily charged, fell across another apparently harmless one, and so made contact with it dangerous. In some manner it came about that the private wire entering Mr. Carbodie's apartment, and connected with his telephone, was thus charged with electricity to such a degree that when he accidentally took hold of it—no one may ever know for what reason, and we can only surmise—he received a terrible shock from the powerful voltage thus transmitted.

"I suspected something like this from the moment I made the discovery that the wire had become loose above his phone, and that the inside of his right hand was mysteriously burned, so that the flesh had actually turned black. Then the sight of those wiremen on the roofs of the buildings close by this morning added to my conviction that Philip Carbodie met his death, not at the hands of any fellow-being, but through a sheer accident; or shall I call it an act of Providence, avenging his inhuman treatment of the poor woman whom he once called a wife, and the dear girl whom he refused to claim as his own daughter?

"Everything is as clear as it could well be, and I anticipate no difficulty whatever in establishing the facts of the matter; with the help of a few persons who may be called to give evidence when the coroner sits on this tragic case. I thank you, Doctor, and will wish you good-morning."

Needless to state it turned out just as Carew predicted. He had things so systematized that there could be no other verdict rendered than that Philip Carbodie came to his death through touching a loosened wire that had become a vehicle for a deadly current of electricity, because of the fury of the gale crossing the wires outside.

Carew did not forget his promise to Molly, and after sending the girl and her mother out of the city, at his own expense, he delved into the case so effectively that he was soon prepared to prove the marriage of Philip Carbodie years before, and the court awarded Mrs. Morton her widow's third of the large estate.

Jack Havens and his Molly have long since become man and wife, and the mother, now fully recovered in

health, makes her home with them; where no guest is honored to the same degree as Morgan Carew.

Actually Hubert Carbodie did turn over a new leaf after coming into his share of his uncle's property, carefully tied up so he might squander the principal. The last heard of him he was serving his country abroad as a lieutenant, and accounts say he is proving himself worthy of the name of an American.

Tarbox and his wife have given up the apartment house, and are happy in the country, where they manage a large property belonging to a wealthy friend of Carew's, of whom he had spoken to John, it may be remembered. They have good reason to always receive the detective joyfully when he takes a notion to run out that way.

As for Carew, he smiles as he smokes his cigar, meditatively looking back to the past when it seemed for a time that the spur of necessity had urged some unknown person to commit a most terrible crime.

Read the detective sketch we have in preparation for our next issue. The title is "The Brand of Jealousy," and the author is A. Worthington Vale.

FLIM-FLAM

ANY one whose business or pleasure requires him to be present at popular resorts may notice a certain closs of natty, young or middle-aged men who seem to have no means of support, and yet are generally supplied with plenty of money. On any pleasant afternoon in the spring or fall you will recognize their faces on Broadway. Go to the gardens on Sixth avenue at night, and you will again notice them sitting around with friends. If you ask a detective who and what they are, he will say: "I think they are gamblers."

If you visit the faro banks and clubrooms, you will see the same men nightly lose sums of money and try in vain to borrow ten dollars to continue the game. When one gets up from the table and says: "Lend me twenty dollars to do business with," the money is immediately handed over, and he then starts out, to come back in the course of an hour or so, return the borrowed capital and show a small sum in addition. You are still inquisitive to know his resources, and wondering why his friends will not lend him money offhand, but will advance capital for "business" purposes. You will ask one of the gambling fraternity, if he happens to be a friend, and he will explain that he is a "flim-flammer."

Where the name of the business ever originated, it is impossible to say, but the field in which it operates is large. The amount of money a good flim-flam operator can obtain in one day depends upon the character and condition of his victims. He enters a store where all hands are busy. "Can you accommodate me with the change of a twenty-dollar bill?" he asks.

The clerk or cashier takes the note, examines it and returns generally with one ten and two five-dollar notes. "I want to put one of these in an envelope. Will you oblige me with a clean bill?"

If he is not accommodated, he says: "I am sorry to trouble you so much, but I would like to have small change for this five." If that is changed, by some hook or crook, the clerk loses five dollars. This is one method practiced by a well-dressed, handsome young man, whom the writer has seen operate five or six times, and cannot discover where the leakage is. The last time it occurred he stood alongside of the cashier at the Iron Pier at Coney Island, and with a full knowledge of what was going to take place, saw the operation. The cashier was short just five dollars that night.

Another system has been in operation against paying-tellers of banks. A man with one arm in a sling asks for change of a note of large denomination, and, taking his place directly in front of the teller, asks him to place the money in a large envelope. The teller hands over a lot of bills, already counted, and in packages with a strip of paper pinned around them. The operator bunglingly tries to place the bulky package in his inside coat pocket and, working with one hand only, naturally attracts the teller's attention. After several unsuccessful attempts he gives it up and hot-temperedly says: "Oh, give me large bills or something I can put in my pocket easily."

The cashier has just counted the bunch of small bills, or knows they are just so many in a package, and fails to count them over when they are thrown back. He throws out a requisite number of notes of larger denomination. The hand on the broken arm of the operator has meantime extracted as many bills as it was safe to do while he was trying to put the big envelope in his pocket. If the teller does count them over, he is stuck, because the operator claims that he didn't count them when handed out, and they were never out of the teller's sight.

When the flim-flammer has not got large capital to operate with, he is contented to walk into a restaurant and put down a twenty-dollar note. The cashier proceeds to count out the change, and, of course, slides in a few trade or silver dollars. "You have dropped some money on the floor," said the operator. The cashier looks; and, sure enough, there is a bill lying behind the counter. He stoops to pick it up, the flim-flammer extracts a note of some kind from the pile, and says:

"Oh, never mind bothering about the change, here is the exact money for my check," and walks off with his booty.

The candy men with some circus shows are adepts at this game. They receive a ten-dollar note to change, and count out the change by having a two-dollar bill double on the top of a pile which they count over their fingers, clasping the notes in the middle. "Two and two are four," they say, counting both ends of the doubled note, and continue in the regular manner to make up the balance of the change, and hand the change to the victim rolled up. The victim thinks he has seen all the change he requires, and pushes it into his pocket without counting it over.

All schemes of this kind are called flim-flam by the men engaged in them, and to a successful operator it requires self-possession with a good nerve, and generally a good talker to get himself out of difficulty when caught. There is always some person who is willing to advance them money if they are good in business, and the field of operation is so large that it takes months to exhaust a new scheme. Many storekeepers have been victimized to such an extent that they suspect that something is wrong the moment change for a note is requesetd.

MIDNIGHT AND A MASK

By HARRY EASTAR

"STOP! What do you want?" cried the Honorable William Dugan as he sprang to his feet, snatching a revolver from the open desk drawer beside him and levelling it at the stocky masked man who was climbing in the library window.

The fellow laughed harshly, unpleasantly, as he stepped nimbly to the floor.

"I wanted to make a call on you and didn't care about comin' in at the door. Too many folks might see me," he explained coolly. "But put up that gun; it might go off and what I've got to tell you will interest you as much as me."

"Who are you? What do you want?" parried Dugan uncertainly. "Did—ah—Stein send you?"

"Stein? Humph! Is he still doin' your dirty work? No, Stein didn't send me. I come of myself." He walked deliberately across the room until he stood but a pace from Dugan, facing him calmly. "Regardin' my name," he added, "I guess you'll know that fast enough when I take this rag off'n my face. But my business with you is private and I don't want none of your servants, nor nobody else, to see me for a bit. I ain't going to hurt you none, not now anyway, so sit down and be sociable, like me." He seated himself comfortably in an armchair beside the desk. "An' now that we're introduced—there's no one else about, is there?"

"What are you so anxious about that for? See here, my man, I have no time to waste on a common thief. If you——"

"Don't get too big for your clothes, Dugan," interrupted the masked caller shortly. "It's more to your interest than mine that nobody overhears us. If you know what's good for you you'll sit down and listen to me like a good little boy."

"What do you mean?" inquired Dugan haughtily, but his voice was a bit unsteady. "Talk quick! When a man is awakened at midnight from a doze in an easy-chair by hearing a burglar at his window he is in no mood to bandy words with the fellow after he has captured him."

" 'Captured him'," chucklingly echoed the "burglar."

"Captured him, certainly. By gad! I've a mind to call in the police."

"Aw, cut it out!" came in disgusted tones from behind the mask. "I'm here to talk business, not with the Hon. William Dugan, candidate for re-election to the State Senate of Pennsylvania; no, it's not him I'm talkin' to; but it's 'Slippery Bill' Deegan, ex-king of the old New York and Philadelphia Gunman's Combine. And——"

"Who are you? We're alone in the house. Speak!" burst from the pale lips of the "candidate for re-election."

"Not so fast, 'Slippery.' Where's your servants?"

"To-morrow being Christmas, I left them off for a holiday. Go on!"

"In a minute," tantalized the other, chuckling grimly. "First of all, I'm goin' to tell you why I come—and that's some story itself! So settle yourself for a nice long chat."

"For God's sake, go on!" almost shrieked Dugan, half raising his revolver.

"Don't you try it!" rang clear and cold from the masked man, "or the cop'll have you before morning! My pals are waiting for me and if I don't join them inside of an hour they'll blow—for me—on 'most every deal you've put through, from the safe-cracking at Newark to the disappearance of Colonel Armstrong. Huh!" he sneered, "I'd get all white and shivery, too, if I was in your place, running for the Senate when you ought to be in Sing Sing. But now what I came for."

"Yes, now what you came for," echoed Dugan hoarsely, collapsing into a chair beside his desk and tugging at his collar. "But first let me—let me say," he added hastily, making a frantic effort to pull himself together, "that I don't know anything about—about Colonel Armstrong. My—my apparent trepidation is—is only a natural outcome of awaking suddenly to find a—a masked man confronting me."

"Maybe, maybe," nodded his visitor sardonically. "Perhaps I'd better go over that Armstrong shooting to sort of set your memory going better."

"Never mind, never mind," faltered his trembling victim, his revolver slipping unheeded from his nerveless hand to the floor.

"All right, then. Now for my business with you. We'll do a bit of supposing. Suppose, needing money mighty bad, I jimmied the window of a house over on Thirty-fourth street pretty late last night and climbed in, thinkin' everybody there was in bed. But s'pose instead I found a young guy and a golden-haired little angel talkin' together real earnestly in the library. And I ducked back of a curtain real quick, waitin' my chance for a getaway. And I heard the girl tellin' how you were courtin' her and——"

"What!"

"Yes!" nodded the man in the mask. "Sounds funny for a thing like you to be courting a little goddess, doesn't it? But, anyway, she was sayin' what an unbearable skunk you are, or words meaning the same thing, and how she just found out a few days ago the reason her papa didn't kick you out of the house. Seems you've got a hold on the old man. When he was in the lumber business, fifteen or twenty years ago, one of his men busted a legal tech—technicality without sayin' anything to the old man, who would be held responsible if the courts ever got on to it. And you have the papers that prove it and a mortgage on his home in the bargain. And she said you'd ruin the old man and jail him, too, unless she married you. Say, ain't you the dirty devil, though? This is worse than the time you——"

"Never mind, never mind," interrupted the politician in choking tones, "what's all this—this supposition leading up to?"

"Just this," came slowly and sternly from his masked adversary. "I fell in love with that little girl just watching her and listening to her talk. And I'm not going to see her forced to marry a low-lived snake like I know you are, 'Slippery Bill.' You're going to hand over to me those papers and that mortgage before I leave you to-night."

Dugan, or Deegan as his visitor had called him, shiv-

ered almost convulsively. Then, with one last desperate effort at self-command, he sneered:

"Oh, am I? You—you flatter yourself, whoever you are. And so chivalrous, too! But I don't know who or what you are talking about. So——"

"Oho! Getting your nerve back, are you?" jeered his masked accuser. "Well, maybe I could shake it a bit if I was to tell you that my name is Timothy Andrews, better known as——"

"Black Tim!" gasped Deegan, with starting eyes.

"That's the name," the man in the mask nodded, "more recently No. 781 of Sing Sing."

"But—but I don't believe it," gurgled the State Senator helplessly. "Take off your mask."

"Don't make any difference whether you believe it or not. I could tell just as much about our past deals one way as another. As to that mask, that's all right and it stays on. Long as its on my remarks ain't exactly evidence. They won't be 'used against me,' as the law sharks say. But just to sort of convince you, I might tell you how you hired the gang to come down here for that little councilman's election four or five years ago and get rid of Armstrong for you."

"Don't—don't bother. I guess you're Tim, all right. But I thought——." His voice died away suddenly.

"You thought he was still doin' time up the river for the job you let him get caught at, didn't you?" finished the man in the mask bitterly. "But Black Tim has friends as *is* friends and they helped him make his getaway"; then more sternly, "but I ain't here to talk about myself. What I want is them papers."

"Well, you won't get them," cried Deegan desperately. "I'm not afraid of you. Why, you fool, don't you know that if you blabbed on me I'd send you to the chair? I've got the whiphand. You might ruin me politically and send me up for a year or two, maybe. But you'd die!"

"They don't send state's-evidence men to the chair," came the slow reply, "but let that go as it will. Give me them papers or I blow. And when I do you'll land in Sing Sing instead of the State Senate, and maybe land in the chair yourself. But give me them papers and Black Tim will never step into the witness-box against you."

"Come now, Tim," whined the politician, squirming in his chair. "We're too good friends to quarrel——"

"Quit lying," came roughly from behind the mask. "When Tim was in that hell-hole up the river he had time to think a lot of things. And it didn't take him long to figure out who put him there to keep him quiet. Are you going to hand over those papers?"

"I don't have them here," growled Deegan, suddenly sullen.

"Another lie!" was the sharp retort. "I know 'Slippery Bill' well enough to know that he'd never trust his valuables away from his own finger-tips. Trot them out!"

"Look here, Tim," the candidate for re-election tugged nervously at his mustache, and paused. Then: "Don't be a fool just because a silly little female——"

"Shut up, you hound!" came tensely from the masked man, as he half rose from his chair. "I don't stand for any blackguarding of her from such a dirty, contemptible dog as you. Here"—he broke off suddenly, noting a motion of Deegan's hand toward his revolver, which lay on the floor beside him where it had fallen from his hand—"let that gun lie! Remember! My pals are waiting for me and——"

"Damn your pals!" roared Deegan frantically, making a sudden wild grab for the revolver. "I don't believe your——"

"Drop that gun! Drop it quick! See! I've got mine levelled square at you. Hands up! That's it," as the politician sullenly obeyed; "now kick your gun over to me. There!" as he picked it up, "I feel better now that I have a real gun in my hands. This thing that I pointed at you," he explained with a chuckle, "was just your paper-knife which I picked up thinkin' it might come handy. I forgot my own gun, so I must thank you for lendin' me yours so obligin'. But enough of the comedy. In six minutes that clock on your mantel will strike one. If you haven't given me the paper by then—you'll take what follows!"

"How would a couple of hundred suit you," suggested the politician desperately.

"Don't waste minutes tryin' to buy me. I'm not for sale to-night, not for every cent you've got."

Came a silence of several minutes, broken only by the steady tick-tock of the clock, and the labored breathing of Deegan. Then suddenly:

"Are you being paid by Dane?" came quickly and suspiciously from the senator. "You're a fool if you're working for that young monkey. He can't save you from the chair, and he can't pay you a tenth that I can."

"Who is this 'Dane'?" parried the man in the mask.

"A young fool she thinks she loves. A poor devil of a medical student, working his way through the city hospital as interne. An insolent beggar. If he's paying you——"

"Aw, drop it! I ain't runnin' these chances for no man. I'm doin' this job on my own hook. I never saw this Deen or whatever you call him——"

"But that time you overheard him and her talking in the library——"

"Stop the quizzing and give me the papers. The clock's due to strike," interrupted the masked man doggedly.

"I haven't got them!"

Ding-dong! struck the clock.

"Good-night, Bill," came grimly from the midnight caller. "You've had your chance. I'm going to blow!"

"No! No! Wait! Wait!" screamed Deegan, in sudden panic. "I'll give them to you in a minute—just wait a minute." He pawed frantically through his desk.

"All right," laughed his visitor. "Be quick, though. Here, don't waste any more time fumbling through every pigeon-hole in the desk. Get your wits together. You know well enough where those papers are!"

Deegan pressed a little spring in the side of his desk and a tiny door flew open. Hurriedly he drew out a long envelope and thrust it toward the masked man.

"Here they are. Take them and get out!" he growled.

"Huh! This is only the mortgage!"

"Here's the other, damn you!" muttered the senator, handing it over.

"Thanks! Yes, this is the right one. Now sit down and receipt that old mortgage in full. You beat the old man out of his money in a dirty crooked land deal, so you morally owe him the mortgage.

"Hurry up! Or—hist! What was that?" he broke off, apparently listening attentively. "Sounds like somebody at the front door," he muttered. "I'm going to take a look. Just receipt that mortgage while I'm gone." Silently he slipped out into the hall.

"Hang him!" growled Deegan, as he was left alone, "what can I do? It would be bad enough if he'd blab, with public opinion against me the way it's been since that Darby graft in the Legislature was exposed, but suppose they'd drag Stein into it, too, and he'd confess—I might land in the chair myself. Ugh!" he shuddered.

drawing his hand across his forehead, beaded with cold sweat. Hurriedly he receipted the mortgage.

"Everything's O. K.," announced his masked tormentor, re-entering from the hall.

Deegan turned to him, eagerly pressing the signed mortgage into his extended hand. "Here it is," he almost whined, "and now you won't do any informing, will you, Tim?"

"That's all right now," came in a chuckle from behind the mask, as the man pocketed the paper after a careful scrutiny of it. "Black Tim will never step into the witness-box against you," he added with another chuckle.

"Then get out!" growled the beaten politician. "I never expected to have half this trouble over that silly, goody-good, nasty piece of feminine——"

Biff! Crash! and the Hon. William Deegan lay sprawling on the floor.

"You vile hound! You dirty cur! Get up, you unspeakable abomination, and let me pound you!" gritted the masked man, standing over him with fists clenched.

"Oh," groaned the senator, "you've broken my jaw!"

"Do you apologize for your disrespectful words, or do you want some more?"

"Oh, no, no, no—yes, yes, I apologize. Oh, my jaw, it's broken! Help me up!"

"If your jaw was broken you couldn't talk. Get up yourself, you dirty thing!"

"Slippery" raised himself painfully to his feet.

"Now get out!" he snarled.

"Not so fast," laughed the masked man, while the politician noted with fear a subtle change in him and in his speech. "Not so fast, 'Slippery'; when I went out into the hall a few minutes ago I unlocked the front door for a few of my friends to enter. They want a talk—and probably a walk with you."

"What—what do they want with me?" gasped Deegan wildly and staring frantically about for a possible weapon. "They—they haven't anything against me, have they?"

"Not any more than the law calls for," came the cold reply.

"The law!" choked the 'ex-king of the gunmen', glaring almost insanely at his masked caller. "Remember you promised——"

"I promised," explained the man in the black mask, "that Black Tim would never step into the witness-box against you. He won't. He'd dead! Shot while resisting arrest this morning. But his confession, made to me on his death-bed in the city hospital——"

"Great God! What do you mean? Who are you?" screamed Deegan, cheeks ashen and eyes staring madly.

The masked man placed a whistle to his lips and blew a sharp, clear, penetrating call.

"Who am I?" he laughed, stripping off the black mask and revealing a smiling youthful face, "I'm Dane, 'that young monkey', 'that insolent fool' who loves the girl you tried to ruin. And these"—pointing to three men who were filing solemnly into the room—"these are my 'pals.' Officers, there's your man!"

NEW RUINS DISCOVERED

EXTENSIVE ruins have been found in New Mexico by Dr. J. Walter Fewkes, of the Smithsonian Institution, who made his report to the Interior Department recently. The mound, the largest of any thus far located, was in Mesa Verde National Park and apparently was built for religious rites and ceremonials. It has been named Sun Temple. There are twenty-five rooms, and the walls, more than 1,000 feet in length, average 4 feet thick. Cedar and pinon trees growing above the mound would indicate that it had been built about 1300 A. D.

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No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, By Redfield Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon.
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, By Pauline Carrington Bouve
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THE HIDDEN HERTLINGS

By WILL H. GREENFIELD

AMOS BLAKE, retired manufacturer, placed a chair for his visitor with a manner that was a discreet mixture of reserve and condescension.

"I have been at some expense to keep the case out of the newspapers, Bobby," he vouchsafed quietly, "and as the police have failed on it I thought you might like to try your hand."

Robert Ferguson, ex-captain of police and private detective, smiled rigidly and stripped off a pair of yellow gloves. His face made Maine granite seem a thing of passion.

"I try everything once, Amos," he said stonily, as he settled himself into the chair. "I hope to change your opinion of detectives, and I'm glad you have furnished the opportunity. What's it all about?"

"Before I tell you, Bobby, I want to say that my contempt for the average sleuth, in or out of the police department, has not diminished. I am still of the opinion that a detective is neither ornamental nor useful in these modern times. At times, by a feat of stupidity or unadulterated bull luck, they might hit the bull's-eye, but not often enough to make them indispensable. Like the ministers who marry us, they profit by other people's mistakes. Perhaps you will be able to prove that I'm in error."

"Perhaps," clipped Ferguson. "Now hand me the story of the case which the police have failed on. Make it short."

"Just as you say," rejoined Blake, quizzical little wrinkles bunching at the corner of his eyes. "Well, Ferguson, my only niece, Alice, and her young husband, Earl Hertling, have vanished from the earth and the police admit themselves baffled. I had called to see the young folks, as was my custom at least once a week, and so was the first to discover their disappearance. Their little home on Drury street conveyed the sense of a living habitation in all details except their presence. Supper, already cooked, stood on the table, the newly arrived laundry was spread on the bed, and letters and private papers were scattered about. Next day a letter was received at police headquarters saying the young folks were safe and sound but were being held for ransom. The sum would be named in a subsequent communication. That was the last the police heard from the kidnappers."

"About how much are you worth, Amos, about fifty thousand dollars?"

"About that, Bobby, as near as I can judge offhand."

"Did young Hertling have any affairs with women before his marriage?"

Blake considered a moment.

"For a time," he said gravely, "I had an idea he was fascinated by Belva Carrick. There's a woman for you, Bobby! Natural, bright, radiant, not guileless precisely but with a freshness of beauty that is not a feat of preservation. Of course her reputation is none of the best, and if I remember rightly she has been found in the company of some very clever crooks at various times."

"Which disposes of Belva, for clever crooks are not kidnapping young married couples these days, not when there is only a uncle with scarcely fifty thousand to his name. Did Hertling have any money?"

"Oh, the police discovered that he had withdrawn all his money from bank about a week before he disappeared, on the same day, in fact, that he presented this petition to the Common Pleas Court."

Ferguson took a paper Blake handed him and read as follows:

"Your petitioner asks that his surname be changed from Hertling to Hertle, believing that, by reason of the atrocious crimes of the German armies and the impenitence of the German nation for the submarine iniquities, a German name, for many years to come, will be obnoxious in this country. Your petitioner believes that Americans should be Americans in habits, customs and in name, and should prove their Americanism by a complete absorption into the spirit of our nationality; and your petitioner has no purpose or reason in changing his name except a desire to be rid of a German appellation which he believes will arouse hostility and prove an unnecessary burden in his future social, personal, commercial and professional relations."

"Wants to be all-American, that boy," said Ferguson. "Don't want to hand down a German name to his children."

"That reminds me, my niece is an expectant mother, Bob, and Hertling will be a father before he is twenty-five years of age."

"Nice," drawled Ferguson with indolent amiability. "Early marriages and large families will keep this nation at the top more than anything I can think of. Well, I'll be getting along now. Might have something to tell you tomorrow."

"What?" exclaimed Blake in bewildered surprise. "You haven't got the police clues and theories yet, Bob, and they are quite a few."

"I've got my own theories, and I'll pick up my own clues, Amos. Maybe I'm stumped and won't admit it!"

But Ferguson's laugh as he left Amos Blake's home wasn't at all the laugh of a general who is facing a possible Waterloo.

Towards seven o'clock the following evening Bob Ferguson paid his second visit to the shoddy little parlor of Amos Blake, who again set forth a comfortable chair and smiled an odd little smile.

"Welcome, Bobby, welcome! And you have succeeded where the entire police force has failed?" Blake chuckled, threw himself back into a listening attitude and looked at the detective encouragingly.

"I have," said Ferguson placidly, and grinned at the other's look of amazed incredulity.

"Are you fooling?" Blake looked him over as if he were some strange animal in a zoo. "What have you discovered?"

"Everything!" Ferguson bridled, clearing his throat noisily. "I know, for instance, that there has been no kidnapping, and that Earl Hertling and his wife left their Drury street home voluntarily and for a well-defined purpose!"

Blake stood up, a look of shock and surprise overspreading his face, but he seemed utterly incapable of speech.

"I know why they left home," continued Ferguson sternly, "and why they have remained away. Earl's petition to have his name changed was a pretty bit of camouflage, but it didn't deceive me for a moment. Neither did the theory that kidnappers were at work. You haven't got enough money to tempt crooks who would have been capable of the job, and furthermore, why should kidnappers carry off Hertling when his wife would have been all that was necessary to open your purse strings? As for that letter to the police, bah! It wouldn't deceive a baby, and you know it!"

"I—I—I admit I wrote it!" stammered Blake, finding his voice at last, and then suddenly losing it again. He dodged Ferguson's eyes and seemed at a loss how to proceed with what he had to say. He drew his hand across his mouth several times and cleared his throat nervously.

"I wanted to fool you, Bob!" he gulped and choked miserably.

"And so did Hertling," scowled Ferguson, "but neither one of you could put anything over on yours truly! I've been too long in the game, Amos, and I guess you'll have to work up a little respect for members of my profession. Hertling overplayed his hand when he petitioned the court to change his name. I knew then that there was something rotten in that particular section of Denmark, and it didn't take me long to find just what it was. It wasn't a bad idea, though, for a young husband who wanted to dodge the draft to advertise his aversion to everything German and then disappear until the coming of the stork would permit him to claim exemption. But I didn't think you would connive at such a bold and contemptible evasion of the draft!"

Amos Blake's brows drew together in a puzzled frown, as if he were wrestling with a problem somewhat beyond his mental scope. He swallowed once with an effort that was audible. Finally he managed to chuckle. The chuckle grew to a laugh, the laugh to a shriek. Tears of mirth ran down his cheeks.

"Draft dodger!" he cried. "You think Earl is a draft dodger, do you? Listen, Bobby, while I a tale unfold for your especial benefit, and to prove to you what I have always contended, that a detective isn't worth his salt! Earl enlisted, with his wife's consent, and had been granted a two weeks' furlough, which I wanted him to spend with his wife at my bungalow at Cornwells. I wrote to him that I wanted him to slip around to Jed Mumford and his wife, who are the oldest friends my niece has in the city, bundle them off to Cornwells and have a good time altogether while I tested the mettle of the police by reporting their disappearance. Earl doesn't know of the fuss I made over his quiet departure, and at this very minute is probably having the time of his life at Cornwells with the country-bred Mumfords for guests!"

"Is that so?" roared Ferguson. "Well, don't go daydreaming like that while there's an alarm clock around. I trotted out to Cornwells yesterday and gave your bungalow a thorough overhauling. There's no quartette of young married folks there, let me tell you, and I happen to know that the police have looked into about every other conceivable place that could shelter a kidnapped pair of belated honeymooners!"

Blake's lips were ghastly and his lips trembled for a moment before he spoke.

"Bobby," he whispered frantically, "what shall we do? It's a kidnapping as sure as you're alive! Bobby, think of something—think, man, think!"

Ordinarily Ferguson was one of the coolest thinkers in a crisis, but now his excitement broke bounds in a profane outpouring of self-applied epithets.

"Hang my dumb soul, I ought to have hunted up that Carrick woman!"

"It's not too late, Bob!" cried Blake.

"Then I'm off!" shouted Ferguson, and made for the door.

"And I'm with you!" cried Blake, as he caught up his hat and followed the raging sleuth into the street. "Spare no expense, Bob, and I'll never ridicule your profession again."

They left Drury street at the first corner, and were hurrying toward a trolley car which had halted to take on passengers when Amos Blake uttered a cry and caught Ferguson's sleeve in a convulsive grip.

"Look, Bob!"

Ferguson, looking in the direction indicated, saw a uniformed policeman seated on a chair before a two-storied brownstone dwelling. From the window over his head leaned a ruddy-cheeked, tow-headed young man who waved his hand and shouted at the top of his lungs.

"Uncle Amos! Uncle Amos!" he bellowed. "Here we are in quarantine with the Mumfords. Their little daughter has smallpox and they caught us here the night we were to leave for Cornwells!"

Blake dashed forward and wrung the young fellow's hand, his face radiant.

"Why the devil didn't you get word to me?" he demanded.

"I wanted to chase the cop around," said Earl Hertling genially, "but Alice wouldn't let me. She said you would be worried if you knew how things were here!"

Herbert Primer has written a thrilling detective story for our next number, entitled "A Motiveless Crime." It will interest you all.

A QUEER RAILWAY

THE most curious railway in existence is probably the Listowel and Bailybunnion Railway, in the west of Ireland.

This little line, whose length is only ten miles, is quaint alike in its name and in the system employed.

It is known as the "Lartigue Single-Rail Elevated Railway."

The "single-rail," it should be added, does not mean a single track railway. It actually has only one rail for engine and train to run on. The rail is supported on iron trestles at a height of three feet three inches from the ground and the locomotive and train are actually balanced on it. The carriages hang down on each side of the line, the passengers in them sitting back to back.

All this is sufficiently curious, but the locomotives of this extraordinary line are the most eccentric looking objects ever seen in waking hours or out of nightmares. They are built with twin boilers and smokestacks, and between them is a huge headlight resembling those in use on American and Canadian railways.

THAT RARA AVIS, THE OSTRICH

By JOHN P. ROBINSON

ONCE in the recent past I wrote an essay about the pelican, therein claiming that he is the funniest bird that ever slept outdoors all the year around. Previously I thought the goose was the queerest duck ever I saw; but I changed my mind upon seeing the pelican, which makes his home down here in Florida and adjacent waters. I say it in this way because I claim that Florida, like farmers' milk, is "more'n haff" water. Excuse the expression; I used this to a friend once, who corrected me by saying "Farmers don't give milk." "I know they don't give milk," says I, "they sell it, and for war prices, even in times of peace; and that's no joke." Down here in Florida where cattle are scarce and undersized we get a good deal of our milk out of a can, which you milk with a can-opener.

But if you doubt that Florida is more than half water, "Come with me," as Bryant says in his wonderful poem, "Thanatopsis"—come with me to the borders of the Everglades, where the waste of marsh stretches far away as the eye can feel, till the adjacent scenery seems to come to a focal point. Miles beyond this is the "Big Cypress," the haunts of the Seminole Indian. The only man your Uncle Sam never could lick. But this is no Everglades story.

It was right at the edge of the Everglades I helped kill the biggest snake ever I saw out of a zoo. But this is no snake story, either; you might say, it's not that snake's tail. I will tell all I know about that reptile some day, though I hate to for fear of frightening women and children. But the truth must be spoken at all times.

However, Florida is much water at times—full of rivers and lakes, but no rippling rills, such as we have up North. No State-of-Maine waterfalls come dashing down rocky hillsides. No, the bayous here are placid and well behaved.

But Florida is full of surprises—this big State, the only State in the Union that looks on the map like the picture of a big banana. You come down to Jacksonville in January expecting to bask in the sunshine, only to encounter a cool wave that makes you hunt your overcoat, and the same morning you read in the paper that cocoanuts are ripe in Miami, just a few miles south. But here, in this sandy banana is where I met the subject of my present remarks, the ostrich.

And of all the ungainly birds ever I saw, the ostrich sure takes the bun. He will take the bun and eat it, too; also anything else that seems to look good, for the ostrich is to the feathered tribe what the goat is to the animal kingdom. He will eat anything from a pretzel to a ship's anchor chains.

The ostrich does not flourish anywhere in the United States except in Florida and California; elsewhere the weather is very much against him, and he soon contracts the floo and turns up his toes. He does not fear to choose death rather than life in a chilly land, for the ostrich is a wicked bird, and knows full well that when he dies he will go to a far warmer place than Boston, or even Philadelphia.

So when in the course of business I visited the place where these birds are born and bred in capivity, and saw a dozen or so lined up for their morning's mush, I marvelled greatly, and at once relegated the pelican and goose to a place of comparative respect in my mental classification. For the ostrich is surely a corker to look at, especially when she is moulting. See footnote about this. And they don't look any prettier in the morning than the belle of the ball.

When you feed hens you merely holler "Chuck! chuck! chuck!" strew some feed on the ground, and they get busy. Not so with the ostrich. When you feed an ostrich you have to carry a step-ladder, say about six feet high. You mount this and hold the basket of grub up to him, it's something like tieing a nosebag on a horse.

Some folks think that ostriches come from Austria, but this is no more the truth than that U-kuleles come from U-boats. The ostrich is usually, if not always, born in Africa, especially where the desert is sandy in places, and it is said that he or she can hike through the sand in a way that will leave a horse, or even an automobile, stalled. For the ostrich is equipped with plenty of length of limb, has good wind and once in motion is as hard to catch as an aeroplane.

And legs! You talk about legs; the ostrich seems at first to be all legs, and then some. A flock of ostriches is really the original Leg Show, especially about moulting time. See footnote. They remind you of nothing so much as a stage full of chorus girls up North, and especially when the feathers are shedding the effect is almost immodest, and a bashful man will say to himself: "Oh, shame on yer," and look the other way. Some folks may think the ostrich's leg is not so symmetrical as chorus girls'; but having been to many leg shows in my time, I maintain that the subject is open for argument; for I recall the glad days of yore when of a rainy afternoon, to kill time and hear the jokes, I would hie me to the Burly Burlesque, sit in the front seat, gallery, where I could have a good view of the girls in the chorus; and my recollections are that they were, now and then, spindle-shanks as knobby as any I saw at the ostrich place. Yea, brother, I recall that the soubrettes, though nimble as crickets, at close range suggested the thirty-year-old mark. The "ponies," about thirty-five, while the "mediums" were fat and forty, and sometimes suggested that grandma ought to be at home knitting warm socks for the boys.

Also, as heretofore recorded, I remember that some of the legs were as knobby as ostriches'; and that is why the thought struck me that if the manager would take that troup of ostriches up North, put tights and spangles on them and make them dance on a hot plate same as they do geese at the cheap dime shows, he would score a howling success. But the climate is against the idea. The ostrich would freeze to death on a cold stage, for he cannot flourish in a draft like the chorus girl. You would have to put a union suit on him and give him some warm winter pants and a sweater, and draw a long woolen stocking over his lengthy neck, else he couldn't get through the winter.

The ostrich, too, is as wicked as a chorus girl in a story—though I do not think the chorus girl is really as bad as she is painted. She usually has to be on the job two performances daily, and that's going some, so it's the quiet domestic life for hers. But in novels they have a reputation for wickedness which brings me back to the ostrich. He is wicked as a Hun and has a disposition worse than a cranky setter dog's.

In some parts of the world I have read that they break the ostrich to harness and ride him; but I wouldn't like to try. Even at his best he couldn't "hit on all four" because he hasn't got them, and riding him to work would suggest the words of the old song:

"For he wouldn't go and he wouldn't stand still.
But he kicked up his heels like an ole saw-mill."

So if I had to choose between walking and riding an ostrich, I would wait for the next flivver, if it took my last jitney; for, although the ostrich has a broad back, it does not seem to me to be covered with plush cushions. His neck, also, is too thin to get your arms around to hold on, like you would a horse's if you are scared to sit up straight, and you would have to hold onto his long, thin windpipe with both hands, and choke him down if he seemed to be beyond control. It might be all right if he kept a steady trot, but if he took to loping and came down with both feet at once, it might jounce the stuffings out of a chap.

Since visiting the ostrich roost, the thought has struck me that these particular ostriches looked especially skinny because maybe the man yanks out their feathers for commercial purposes, and that they were not moulting at all. But I still maintain that an ostrich with the feathers off his hams makes you think of a chorus girl, and I would like to see an ostrich with tights on and have his picture taken for the paper, just to prove it.

The ostrich also has a voice that is pitched somewhere between the squawk of an auto horn and the noise I have heard a soubrette make when she was really down on the bill to sing something.

Another real funny bird I know that lives down here is the mud turtle. "To be continued in our next."

Watch for another funny story by John P. Robinson, to appear in No. 31. It is entitled "Eggs is Eggs."

WALKING HILLS

IN the eastern portion of the Colorado Desert, in Southern California, is a chain of hills nearly a hundred miles long which are known as the "Walking Hills." These hills, which are 200 and 300 feet high, are constantly advancing across the plain.

The desert is about a hundred miles wide at this point, and it is, for the most part, a level plain devoid of vegetation. Across this plain continually blows a strong wind, always in the one direction—from the west. Some time in the distant past, at some point far to the westward, the sands which advance before the stiff breeze of the desert began piling up, and this great chain of hills had its beginning. Then they began their journey across the desert plain.

The hills are always advancing. The wind, which is constantly adding to their height by bringing new material, also cuts away the sand from the western slope and shoots it over the hill, where it falls upon the eastern slope. Thus, as fast as one side is eaten away the other side is built to and the hill is moved slowly eastward.

A little more than twenty-five years ago the Southern Pacific Railway Company built its road along the eastern rim of the desert of these hills. At that time they were a long way from the tracks of the road. Now they have advanced to the tracks and threatened to bury them, and the company will be obliged to change the roadbed, either moving further to the east or else swinging around the chain and bringing the road along the western side. In either case a large section of the road will have to be entirely rebuilt.

MISCONCEPTION ABOUT ALASKA

ALASKA is the most misunderstood and misrepresented section of the United States. People generally, and sincerely, believe that the name Alaska is synonymous with snow and ice and couple it accordingly with ice-cream freezers and cold drinks, writes John A. Sleicher in *Leslie's*. Yet the principal cities of Alaska along its southern coast line—Juneau, Ketchikan, Cordova, Valdes and Seward—do not average as cold in midwinter as New York and are seldom as cold as Baltimore and Washington during cold waves.

Alaska is one-fifth the size of the whole United States and its prodigious area of about 600,000 square miles, nearly three times the size of the German Empire, spreads from the temperate zone to the Arctic Circle. Not one-quarter of it is in the latter. Below the circle lies a magnificent belt of fertile soil. It is estimated by Government authorities that the great agricultural area of Alaska's fertile valleys and plains, on many of which cattle can be wintered without feeding, aggregates 30,000 square miles, with a climate like that of northern Europe—Norway, Finland and Sweden. This land is richer and more productive than that of any other country in the world, well watered, fairly well timbered, and 320 acres are open free to the settler if he wishes to take up a homestead.

In the great central valley of Alaska the coldest days of winter are not as cold as reported from time to time in the prairie states of the United States, like Nebraska, Montana and North Dakota. Stock raisers and farmers are going into Alaska on every steamer from Seattle to look the country over. They are equipped with the special Government reports on Alaska, that can be had without charge by writing to the Department of Agriculture and to the Department of the Interior at Washington, or from any member of Congress. Visitors to Alaska are surprised at what they find when they reach the interior. Nor do they need to suffer hardship in making the trip, for first-class steamships to the principal ports, with unusually reasonable rates, are running out from Seattle nearly every day, and railroad and automobile lines to the interior are readily available. Nor is it necessary to go far, for every valley leading from the coast is waiting for the husbandman.

A SANCTIMONIOUS VILLAIN

By PETERS BLACK

"WELL, Clark, wish me good luck, and be quick about it, too, for I'm off in half a minute."

"Phew! Why all this hurry? What's up, Dick?"

"I've got hold of that mysterious illicit whisky case," said Dalton triumphantly.

"Well, well, so that's it, hey? Here's my hand and my best wishes go with you."

"Thank you," and Dalton vanished.

This short conversation occurred in the Central Office one fine day in October. Dalton was a fine young fellow, the youngest regular detective in our corps. Sinewy, well made, dashing, he was a model detective in all but one thing. And that one thing was his youth; for once on a trail he followed it impetuously, the result being a few most brilliant captures and numerous instances of frightened birds escaping the snares laid for them, when an older and more cautious detective might have successfully terminated every case, though in a far quieter manner.

Now this mysterious whisky case, so-called, was that it had become known that illicit liquor was finding its way into New York in some quantity, though from where and by whom manufactured was a question as yet unsolved.

And it was this question which Dalton felt so happy over having been commissioned to solve. Older detectives than he had already failed and he knew that if he were successful it would be a feather in his cap of which he might honestly be proud.

No news was heard of Dalton for some time. Nor was he seen by any of us until I stumbled over him one night several weeks later. He was disguised, but not so thoroughly that I could not penetrate it.

"Well, Dick, what success?" I asked.

"Only so-so," he replied, in an offhand way. I could see, however, from his manner that this reply concealed something which he was in doubt whether or not he should tell. One detective rarely gives another his confidence, for it is a profession in which there is considerable jealousy. But Dick had known me intimately for a long time; I was much older than he, and had gained laurels enough of my own to have no need of robbing him. This view of the case must have occurred to him, for he finally said confidentially:

"I'm on the trail at last. The still is in Mount Vernon, and the head man of the gang is old Ike Wherry."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed in astonishment and with wrinkled forehead added: "Then, Dick, I advise you to use the greatest caution. Ike Wherry will be a hard case to handle. I hope you won't be offended at my cautioning you."

"Not at all, Clark, not at all," said Dick heartily. "You are an older man than myself and I know are honest at heart, and would say nothing you did not think would be for my good."

"You may be sure of that," I said earnestly. "When do you go to Mount Vernon?"

"Tomorrow."

"And when may we expect to hear from you?"

"In a few days, a week at the furthest, I should think."

"Well, good-by and good luck!"

And we cordially shook hands and parted.

Ike Wherry was a man approaching sixty. He was known by reputation to every detective on the force. Left an immense fortune when just out of his teens, he made ducks and drakes of it in a few years. Since the loss of his fortune he had lived in first-class style, the money coming from whence nobody knew.

For over a score of years he had been a suspected man and had been connected on suspicion with many a noted bank robbery and forgery, but no detective had ever been shrewd enough to catch the old man napping. Bob Sammis may have learned the whole truth but we found him with a bullet in his brain, put there I always believed, by this same Ike Wherry. But it could not be proved. Even suspicion could not be directed toward him, so wily had the old fox been.

No wonder then that I warned brave but impetuous and rash young Dalton. And as I went homeward I inwardly resolved that in case I did not hear from Dalton in a week I would follow up the clue he had given me as to his intended movements.

And now, with the reader's permission, I will follow the movements of Dalton, relating facts as they occurred and not in the order in which I learned of them.

Assuming the character of a young fellow bent on sport, with gun-case and fishing-rod conspicuously in sight, Dalton went to Mount Vernon the day following, which chanced to be Saturday.

The first thing for him to do was to learn of Wherry.

"Wherry—Wherry!" said the clerk of the village hotel. "Wherry—Wherry!" thoughtfully. "Never heard the name before."

"Ah!" thought Dalton. "He must sail under some other name up here. Well, I must keep my eyes open. I wonder if I would know the man if I saw him?"

Taking a cigar, Dalton sat on a chair outside of the hotel, which fronted on the main street and past which nearly everybody went. Here he sat all that afternoon and evening, seeing a number of men pass of about the correct age but not answering to the idea of Ike Wherry as it was fixed in Dalton's mind. The detective went to bed no wiser than when he had first entered the village. The following morning—Sunday—he took a stroll around the place after breakfast. Chance led him past a church into which a crowd was then pouring. He paused a moment, then decided to enter; something, he thought, might come of it.

"A nice lot of chickens," he thought as he glanced around on the array of fresh, smiling faces of the country girls. "If I were a marrying man I believe I'd come up here to select a wife."

He glanced over the entire congregation. Ike Wherry was not among the crowd of people and his eyes drifted back into contemplation of the girls of Mount Vernon. Very little he heard of the opening exercises, so engrossed was he, but his attention was finally attracted to the pulpit on account of a very harsh and peculiar voice.

"That's Deacon Tubbs!" he heard some one say.

"Brethern and sistern," said the deacon, "this morning

a very disagreeable ducty and a pleasure devolve on me. The first is to inform you that our beloved pastor has suddenly been taken ill; the second is to inform you that our new neighbor, comparatively speaking, Mr. Hardrock, a true Christian and a very pious man in spite of his great wealth, has consented to address us. He has been ordained for the ministry, he tells me, but failed to follow up the profession of preaching on account of poor health in early years."

With this specimen of his elocution, Deacon Tubbs subsided, and there arose in the pulpit the slender and somewhat angular form of a man on the shady side of fifty; his face was devoid of hirsute appendage save two little locks, which might have passed for side-whiskers. A more sanctimonious, long-drawn face Dalton thought he had never seen.

Mr. Hardrock was a good exhorter. "He made things bounce," said one of the small boys on the back-bench near the door. Dalton sank back in the pew in a comfortable position and gazed at the face of the speaker from half-closed eyes. Then he suddenly aroused himself from his half-dreamy condition and sat bolt upright in the pew. With wide-open eyes he now scanned the exhorter. Could it be possible?

The face of Mr. Hardrock was just the face he had expected Ike Wherry to wear. But Ike Wherry in a pulpit? It seemed preposterous.

"I must be out of my head," said Dalton.

But try as he would to drive from his mind the idea which had entered it, he could not do so. It was like Bancho's ghost, and "would not down."

"Who is Mr. Hardrock?" he inquired of the clerk on reaching the hotel.

"He is a gentleman reputed to be immensely wealthy and lives on a splendid estate several miles from here. He came about three years ago, bought the place and paid a few thousands down, saying he would pay the balance at the end of a year if he was pleased. At the end of the year he planked down the balance without even wincing, they said, and a round sum it was, too."

"I suppose you know where he belonged before coming here?" said Dalton carelessly.

"No. In some respects he's a very queer man. He lives up there in the villa, practically alone; his only servant is one of the crossest and crabbedest old women who ever drew the breath of life."

"Did she live here?"

"No; he brought her with him, and neither of 'em ever breathed a word of where they lived before.

"Ah!" muttered Dalton, as he turned away, "there's plenty of smoke; there must be a fire behind it all."

He felt sure that he was on the right track, that Hardrock and Ike Wherry were one and the same person. Hardrock was to preach again in the evening, and once more Dalton sat in the audience, watching that sanctimonious face as a cat watches a mouse.

And as he scanned it he could now and then see its rigid lines unbend, could see a cold, crafty smile spread over it, as if its owner were laughing inwardly as he reflected how completely he was deceiving the people who listened to him.

The next day Dalton set out on foot for the premises of the sanctimonious one.

The house was situated in the heart of a beautiful grove, much after the fashion of the old baronial mansions of England. Numerous roads led to it, one and all winding in and out beneath the arches of the grand old trees.

"By George!" muttered Dalton, "the old fellow was shrewd in selecting such a place for a still. Retired as this is, he might keep in operation for years without being detected."

Avoiding the roads, he worked through the woods to a point where he could see the house. And at this point he lay in concealment for hours, watching it intently.

A somber silence overhung the whole place. Not a human being was visible. If he had expected to see some rough-looking men—such as might be expected to be found in charge of an illicit still, he was disappointed.

It was a place for profound and holy meditation, well suited to the character of Mr. Hardrock, if Mr. Hardrock were not somebody else in disguise.

It was late in the afternoon before Dalton saw the first sign of life about the place.

Then Mr. Hardrock was to be observed coming across the lawn, accompanied by a young man in a soldier's uniform, while beside them gamboled a large dog.

Dalton quickly drew back and soon placed himself on the shaded road which they were heading for.

In a minute or two the meeting took place.

Hardrock bowed stiffly.

"I suppose, sir, you are aware that these grounds are private?" he asked coldly.

"I did not know it," said Dalton, and then appeared to look at the other in surprise. "Why, bless my soul, if this isn't Ire Wherry!" he said pointedly.

"What do you mean, sir?" said Mr. Hardrock haughtily, raising one arm as if to defend himself.

"Yes, what do you mean?" demanded the young officer, "by insulting my old friend here, Mr. Hardrock."

"Hardrock!" exclaimed Dalton. "Pray excuse me, gentlemen, for the blunder I have made; and then with a well-counterfeited, puzzled expression, he said: "And you are sure, sir, that this gentleman is Mr. Hardrock and nobody else?"

"I'd swear to it," said the young officer positively. "As I suppose you observe, I am an officer in the army. Well, then, Mr. Hardrock was once chaplain of our regiment."

"I know you will excuse me," said Dalton, apologetically. "Good-day, gentlemen," and touching his cap he withdrew. But not to leave the grounds.

Once out of sight he plunged again into the woods, his face lighted by a smile. At first he had been stumped by the officer's defense of the man. But all his consternation vanished when there flashed across his mind a story of Ike Wherry telling of just such an escapade.

In fact, it was the first tangible evidence he had obtained that Hardrock and Wherry were one and the same person.

He determined to effect an entrance to the house. Lying in his covert, watching and waiting, he was suddenly startled by a noise. Turning quickly, he was just in time to see, swiftly descending, a heavy club in the brawny hands of a rough-looking fellow wearing a red shirt. Instinctively he flung up his arm to protect his head. Too late! The next instant he was lying there prone and senseless, with an ugly gash in his head.

When he recovered consciousness it was to find himself in a close-smelling, damp cellar, guarded by the fellow who had struck him down.

"No noise, now, do you understand?" gruffly said the other. "I've got orders to make a 'stiff' of you at the first sound, so be durned careful," and the fellow played meaningly with the hilt of a knife.

How long he remained in captivity Dalton had no means of positively judging. He thought it to be four or five days by computing the number of meals brought him.

"Why am I kept here?" he one day asked his guard.

"You must ask the boss. I don't know, though I think he's waiting until that young officer is gone afore he settles you."

Next night Dalton was awakened from a sleep he had fallen into by a rough shake, and sitting up found himself face to face with the sanctimonious Hardrock. But the face was anything now except sanctimonious. It was bitter and savage as that of a fiend.

"Who are you?" he demanded, at the same time kicking Dalton.

"None of your business," was the rude reply. "By what right am I confined here?"

"The right of might!" sneered the other. "Boy, what ever possessed you to dare to dream of tracking down Ike Wherry? Oh, I know who and what you are; here is your badge. Your life is in my hands, and on your answering a few questions depends whether you live or not. Who put you on my trail?"

Dalton shuddered. He was as brave as a lion, but instinctively he knew that this man would never let him leave the place alive, that he was now holding out false hopes only to extract information from him. And he was therefore silent.

"Will you not answer?"

"No," was the point-blank reply.

"Starve him for a day or two, Tom. See that he gets neither food nor drink. We'll see if he can't be brought to terms." And smiling in a cruel way he turned and left the place.

What Dalton soon suffered defies description. His flesh began to shrink, his limbs diminished in size and he was beginning to sink rapidly. If death must come, Hardrock should not profit by any words from him. And then—a hope, a wild, desperate hope, entered his heart. He found that he could slip his attenuated hands through the bonds that had at first been painfully tight.

His keeper was dozing. Dalton chafed his wrists noiselessly until the muscles lost the trained feeling, due to having been kept in one position, and he softly arose. A small keg was the only weapon he could possess himself of. Taking it by the chines he raised it on high and brought it down on his keeper's head with all the strength he could muster.

With a groan the fellow rolled on the damp floor.

With high-beating heart and trembling limbs he went to the door, after possessing himself of the key. In a minute he had the door open.

Then he paused. He was called upon now to traverse an unknown road. Suppose he should make a mistake and stumble in upon the distillers at their work?

"God guide me aright," he prayed, and taking the knife from the keeper's belt, softly crept across the cellar towards the stairs.

Up them he went and found himself on the main floor of the house. He stole through the hall to the front door and drew its bolts.

In another moment he would have been safe, without having been seen. But Hardrock, or rather Wherry, chanced to step into the hall. Uttering a surprised cry, he sprang toward the door, and Dalton, weak from hunger, reeled across the lawn toward the woods. He reached it first, but only a few feet in advance. Wherry bounded after him like a wild animal—and sprang into my arms.

The man who had eluded justice so long was now a prisoner!

Alarmed at not hearing from Dalton, I had gone to Mount Vernon. I knew Wherry's face perfectly, and chancing to see Hardrock in the street I recognized him at once. At once I formed a posse to go after him, and had just time to form my ambush when the man fell a prey to us.

He fought like a tiger, but it was no use.

Having secured him, we crossed the lawn, and the front door being open, had no difficulty in entering the house, beneath which we found a whisky still in full blast.

Dalton was given the credit of having unearthed the gang; but I would not care to purchase similar honor at so great a cost, for it was a full month before Dalton was himself again.

"Ten years in Sing Sing at hard labor!"

This was the sentence pronounced against the sanctimonious villain.

A new series begins in our next publication called "Stories of Great Detectives." They are true biographical sketches of famous criminal hunters whose names are household words. Do not miss reading them, as they contain many daring exploits and exciting adventures.

MATHEMATICS OF A PACK OF CARDS

EVERY card player probably has wondered at times how many combinations it is possible to make with the fifty-two cards of the pack. In a game like whist or bridge, where each player receives a hand of thirteen cards, dealt out from the pack of fifty-two, the total possible number of different hands which may thus be dealt is greater than six hundred thousand millions. The exact number is 635,013,559,600.

This number however, large as it may appear, becomes not merely small but practically invisible when compared with the total number of arrangements in which the fifty-two cards may be placed after the shuffle. To quote the whole of this number would take too much space, but it may be mentioned that it begins with eighty, followed by sixty-six other figures. It would be quite a hopeless task to attempt to grasp the conception of the real meaning of such a number; but some idea (at least of its inconceivability) may be presented by means of the following calculations:

Let us suppose that two thousand millions of human beings (each supplied with a pack of cards) were to attempt actually to produce every possible arrangement of the fifty-two cards.

It is further to be supposed that they work ceaselessly, without rest day or night, from year's end to year's end, at the rate of one new arrangement per second for each person during a period of 100,000 years. It should be noted that the entire population of the earth today is estimated to be in the neighborhood of 1,600,000,000.

The hypothesis from which we start is that a population one-quarter more than that which now exists has spent its whole time during an interval more than fifty times the duration of the Christian era in shuffling cards at the rate of one shuffle per second, or more than thirty-one million shuffles in each year per head. In view of such figures, the reader may well ask how many times the total number of arrangements will have been produced by this vast amount of sustained human effort. The answer is, not once.

"CHIPS"

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

HIS name was Senor Don Pedro Manuel Jose Garcia Cristofero Ortego. It was longer by half than he was, but when sworn at (which was the usual way in which he was addressed) they called him simply "Chips." In fact, when Long Bill, the gambler—"somewhere down on his luck," as he expressed it—adopted the boy for a mascot, he christened him "P. Chips"—Poker Chips—out of compliment for the game whose varying fortunes he had followed for the better part of his life. Long Bill never went into a game unless Chips was somewhere about, and it certainly seemed that Chips was, by special appointment, a walking delegate for the Goddess of Chance. Fortune smiled on Long Bill from the day the six-year-old Mexican boy became his protégé.

But Chips failed to understand his position. He was *persona grata* to the exclusive court of King Luck. He radiated good fortune in his protector's direction by inherent qualities rather than by any physical arts, and when he undertook to prove a benefit to Long Bill, in a natural way, he failed miserably, tragically.

Some there are in Phœnix, Arizona, to-day, who remember Long Bill's last game of poker. Four men were in that game—a Mexican, two miners and Bill, all more or less under the influence of liquor with the exception of the gambler; and while the woman at the piano sang her songs in a cracked voice, the game proceeded.

Chips was there, alternately accompanying the piano on his mouth organ and watching the game. A stake of phenomenal proportions finally drew his undivided attention, and he watched the play with his sharp, bright eyes.

The game went on. Suddenly, with a shrill cry, Chips darted forward and, from the Mexican's side of the table, jerked what is technically known as a "table hold-out." It is a contrivance for cheating, and in it four kings were tightly clutched awaiting the hand of the dishonest player.

"Caramba!" shouted the Mexican, his face white with rage.

Simultaneously with the word, his knife flashed in the rays of the electric light and Chips fell to the floor with a childish cry of pain.

Instantly, and with cat-like quickness, Long Bill drew his revolver and fired. The Mexican started up, reeled and fell face down on the table, while Bill walked to the place where Chips was lying and knelt beside him.

"Chips," he said, with a grim smile, as he rose to his feet, "has been gathered in But I have played even. If the sheriff questions my right to act as I have done, he knows where to find me!"

Then again he looked down at the tattered form, one of the grimy little hands still clutching the mouth-organ.

"Poor Chips!" he muttered, shaking his head; "and I had the infernal Greaser beaten, too, with four aces!"

Then he left the gambling hall.

Never again did Long Bill play a game of poker.

He took to dealing faro.

AN AERONAUT OF WASHINGTON'S TIME

THE important part now played by aerial craft in war-time and peace would perhaps not be so surprising to our ancestors, if they could return to earth, as we sometimes imagine. There is ground for belief that George Washington considered the balloon, although in his day it was a very crude contrivance, capable of development to a point where it would be "useful to mankind in general." General Washington was one of the patrons of the first balloon ascension in the New World, which took place at Philadelphia 126 years ago, on January 9, 1793. The aeronaut was a Frenchman, Jean Pierro Blanchard, who later made a balloon trip across the English Channel. President Washington was an interested observer of the ascent, and before Blanchard stepped into the car the President gave him a letter, which ran as follows:

"George Washington, President of the United States of America, to all to whom these presents come:

"The bearer hereof, Mr. Blanchard, a citizen of France, proposing to ascend in a balloon from the city of Philadelphia at 10 o'clock A. M. this day, to pass in such direction and to descend at such place as circumstances may render most convenient, these are, therefore, to recommend to all citizens of the United States, and others, that in his passage, descent, return, or sojourning elsewhere, they oppose no hindrance or molestation to the said Mr. Blanchard.

"Given under my hand and seal at the city of Philadelphia, this 9th day of January, 1973, and of the independence of America the seventeenth."

A contemporary account of Blanchard's ascent and journey, which occupied forty-six minutes, covered fifteen miles and ended in Deptford Township, New Jersey, says that "an immense concourse of spectators assembled at the Prison Court to see the ascent." A band played several selections.

"As soon as the clock struck 10, everything being punctually ready, Mr. Blanchard took a respectful leave of all the spectators, and received from the hands of the President a paper; at the same time the President spoke a few words to this bold adventurer, who immediately leaped into his boat, which was painted blue and spangled. . . . After a few minutes, the wind blowing from the northward and westward, the balloon rose to an immense height and then shaped its course toward the southward and eastward. Several gentlemen galloped down the Point Road, but soon lost sight of it, for it moved at a rate of twenty miles an hour. Great numbers, who had neglected to purchase tickets, were afflicted with considerable regret at not having been present in the Prison Court to see the preparations and to witness the undaunted confidence of the man who thus sublimely dared to soar through the regions of the air."

A COAT SLEEVE

The Story of a New York Detective

By G. G. SMALL

CHAPTER FIVE

IF she ever had seen the poor creature before, it was evident that she had changed so greatly that she was undecided.

"What do you think, Mrs. Rafferty?" I finally asked.

"Be me soul, Oi'm bothered," said she, with a sigh.

"Do you think you have ever seen her before?"

"Sure, Oi think so, an' I don't."

"May she speak to her?" I asked the superintendent.

"Yes," said he, obligingly.

"Speak to her, Mrs. Rafferty," said I.

"Poor creathur!" and she hesitated.

"She's perfectly harmless," said the officials.

"Divil a haper Oi care whether she is or not, for ther matther av that; but it's sad it makes me to look at her," she replied, and then she approached nearer and looked into her face, but without attracting her attention.

"Speak to her," I said again.

"Worra, worra, Mrs. Page, is it yersilf Oi'm lookin' at?" she finally asked.

But the woman heeded her not.

"Do you think it is her?" I asked.

"Faix, Oi'd almost swear ter it. But, sure, where's her hair?"

"We always cut it when they come here," said the superintendent.

"Well, thin, if I war afther comin' ter yer ould madhouse, O'd loike ter say the man or woman as wud cut off me hair from me head," she said resolutely. "It's a shame, so it is."

"No, it is the best thing that can be done for them," said the medical man. "Their trouble is all in their heads, and the cooler they can be kept the better it is for them."

"Is that so? Well, Oi'd like ter say yees try it on me," and the smile that went over the physician's face as he glanced at Mrs. Rafferty's red hair was as much as to say that he would not care to undertake the job himself.

But we were losing time, so I suggested that she take the patient by the hand and speak to her again.

She proceeded to do so.

"Mrs. Page, poor crathur, is it yersilf? Don't yees know me—Mrs. Rafferty, that used ter live in ther same house wid yees, and used ter bathe yer head when it ached, an' call yees a fool for not knockin' blazes out av yer blackguard of a husband? Spake ter me, darlint!" she said with real Irish pathos.

The woman turned and met her gaze, but her face did not change its expression in the least. It seemed wholly immobile.

"Don't yees know me, darlint?"

"Oh, but he is dead, what is the use of speaking of him?" asked she, speaking for the first time in my presence.

"Who's dead?" asked Mrs. Rafferty.

"Yes, he is dead. They killed him. But they couldn't help it, he was so good and handsome. What do you want?" this with solemn earnestness.

"Faix, I come ter spake wid yees."

"Who are you?"

"Don't yees knor me, eschula?"

"It was as much your fault as anybody's. He couldn't help it if he didn't love me," she said, and then she drew such a sigh, relapsing after it into her old pose again.

"Don't yees know me, yer ould friend?" persisted Mrs. Rafferty.

"Oh, yes. You are the woman that looks like me. But go away and be as happy as you can, for I am happy."

"Begorra, an' if I didn't hear yees soy so I'd not believe it any more than Oi do now."

Then, seeing that Mrs. Rafferty was not making any headway, I approached her.

"Are you the wife of Thomas Page?" I asked suddenly.

She stared and looked at me wildly for a moment.

"No, I am nobody's wife; I was never married, but I am waiting for my prince to come; then, oh! then!

She sang and in a very fair voice rendered one verse of a beautiful song.

"Is your name Eve Page?"

"No."

"Did it used to be your name?"

"Oh, yes, but I have changed it now."

"How have you changed it?"

"I have torn out the Page," she replied; and then changing suddenly, as only insane persons will do, she laughed uproariously.

"You see, it is no use, my dear, sir," said the superintendent. "You can make nothing out of what she says, for if you had asked her if her name was Eve or Molly Brown, she would probably have given you the same answers, or ones akin to them. She is a hopeless case."

"That may be so, doctor, in a medical point of view, but for my purpose I do not think her entirely a hopeless case. I believe her to be Mrs. Eve Page, once the wife, now the widow, of Thomas Page.

"What's that yer soy? Is ther blackguard dead?" asked Mrs. Rafferty quickly.

"He is."

"Ther divil run away wid him!"

"But do you positively identify her as Mrs. Page?" I asked of her.

"Begob, I'd swear ter it now!" said she, and her manner showed that she meant it.

"May I try one more experiment, doctor?"

"Yes, if it does not excite the patient."

"Let us see"; and taking the photograph of Page and his wife from my pocket, I held it up before her eyes.

She gazed at it a few moments unmoved and without

speaking; then, quick as a flash, she snatched it from my hand.

I saw the doctor approach as though he did not like the procedure, but I was all eyes for the patient.

"Yes, yes, it is he! it is he! He is false, and this is his mistress beside him. Oh! oh! take it away; take it away quickly, for he will kill me!" she cried, and bounding out of her quiescent state, she began to tear up and down the room in a wild frenzy.

The superintendent signaled to the keeper, who quickly caught her; but although he was a giant in comparison, he had a desperate struggle with her before she could be secured; and during the struggle the photograph was so badly torn and crumpled that it was utterly worthless.

"This must cease. You have thrown her into a paroxysm from which she may not recover for a week. I should not have allowed you to show her the picture," said the doctor.

"But I have gained a point, I think."

"Possibly you do think so, but if you were a specialist in insanity cases, instead of being a detective, you would probably know that she would act about the same had you shown her a tea-store chromo or a picture of the Holy Family."

"You may be right, but I must beg to differ with you," said I.

"Poor crathur!" Mrs. Rafferty moaned.

"I think that I can convince you one of these days, before long, that I am right."

"From your standpoint you may be."

"This woman has been made crazy by the desertion of her by her husband, and my part of the business just now is to find out what other woman is acting her part; who has been acting it for more than a year past, receiving large remittances from her husband in New York, and imitating her handwriting so well as to deceive him. This is *my* part of the business, doctor, while it is yours to take as good care of the poor woman as you can."

"Bad luck ter him if he don't," said my belligerent companion.

"You detectives are always weaving up romances," said the doctor.

"But it is a romantic tragedy in this case. Mr. Page lived apart from his wife for years in New York. Falling into the snare set by other women, he was finally murdered."

"Murdered!" exclaimed both the doctor and Mrs. Rafferty at the same time.

"Yes, murdered."

"An' it serves him roight, so it does, for if he'd been at home wid his dacint woife an'-lavin' strange women alone, he'd been alive an' healthy terday, so he wud."

"Do you tell me that there is another woman impersonating this patient?" asked the doctor.

"Yes; and not only has she been doing so for a year past, I am convinced, but she is now, to my certain knowledge, at work in New York, trying to get letters of administration upon Page's estate, which amounts to over five hundred thousand dollars."

"Have you ever seen this woman?"

"If what I believe to be true in this case, I have. And, Mrs. Rafferty, you can bring others to identify her, can you not?"

"Oi can, sur."

"And so can I."

"What sort of a looking person is this woman who is doing the impersonating?"

"One greatly resembling your patient, but there are marked differences. For instance, your patient, whom I assume to be Mrs. Page, has her own natural teeth, while the artful impersonator has at least one set of false ones."

"That is an important point, certainly."

"Sure, Oi'd always know her by her tathe," put in Mrs. Rafferty.

"And there are other physical differences which can be shown."

"Such a person as you describe has been to visit my patient several times, claiming to be her sister," said the doctor.

"Indeed, is that so?"

"Yes, and I never doubted it, seeing such a striking resemblance. But now that you mention it, I remember that she had false upper teeth."

"That is the party."

"Bad luck ter her!" said Mrs. Rafferty. "Oi'd loike ter knock 'em down her t'roat, so I wud, begorra!"

"Did this woman give you any address?"

"I believe not; but if you will step into the office I will let you know," said the doctor, leading the way.

"Faix, but it's glad Oi am ter get out av that bedlam," sighed Mrs. Rafferty, as we left the ward and reached the outer office.

The superintendent spoke to one of the clerks, and together they looked over the books for a few moments.

"She gave her address as number so-and-so Broad street," said he, returning to me.

I put it down in my mem-book.

"Did she ever say where her 'sister' lived, or what had become of her effects?"

"No; and we took it for granted that she lived with her."

"We shall find out about that. Do you remember her furniture and things, Mrs. Rafferty?" I asked, turning to her.

"Faith, Oi do; ivery dud an' thing."

"Very well; we will see about this. Good-day, doctor. I am sorry if I have made you any extra trouble; but you know the law must have some sway as well as physic."

"Oh, yes," he replied pleasantly.

"I may be obliged to trouble you more before this case is closed; but I trust you will remember that it will be in the cause of law and justice if I do. Good-day."

"Good-day."

With this I escorted Mrs. Rafferty out of the building and assisted her into the waiting cab.

"Well, what do you think?" I asked as we started back to the city.

"Faix, Oi think there's more divilment in the worruld than Oi iver thort av before," she said.

"Your washing is going on all right?"

"Av course, Mrs. O'Brady knows her business," said she, and she gave her head a wild queenly toss, just as though she was used to having servants, and this one she had confidence in.

Indeed, she was not only serving me well, but she was queening it beautifully.

"The children are all right?"

"Yes."

"And it isn't time yet for two or three hours for Mr. Rafferty to return from work?"

"Nor."

"Well, will you go with me to this address and see what we can find out?"

"Oi will. Sure, yer a dacint man, an' I loikes ther stoyle yer takes me about in," said she, looking from the window in the hopes of seeing some envious acquaintance.

"All right; I think I have a plan that will admit us to this house, provided we can find the agent; and what I want of you is to see if what we find there is the same as Mrs. Page used to have when she lived in the house with you. What say?"

"Oi'm wid yees!" said she earnestly, for outside of the excitement and the scandal so dear to a woman's heart, she was being taken about in a style that overwhelmed her on account of its gorgeousness.

My plan was this: to find the landlord or agent of the place, and by showing him letters and papers, and by saying that Mrs. Page wished me to take a friend of mine to see the rooms, as she intended to give them up soon, I hoped for success.

To make a long story short, I succeeded to the fullness of my most sanguine hopes.

The landlord had a duplicate key to her rooms.

I told him at a venture that she wrote me to that effect.

Mrs. Rafferty and myself were let in by the landlord.

I had posted her how to act, and what to say; to go over the house just as though she intended to hire it; and, of course, rough, plebeian, Irish woman though she was, I never saw anything finer than her acting was, as the landlord, naturally guarded, took us over the place.

She nodded at this, and frowned at that, and then she would tip me the quiet wink, until, finally, she appeared satisfied.

It was a perfect comedy; and I have often thought that I wouldn't like a better stool-pigeon in almost any case than that same Mrs. Rafferty was.

Again we got into the cab, with orders to the driver to proceed directly to the residence of Mrs. Rafferty. We started.

"All?" I asked.

"Begorra, it's ther very same," said she.

"What is?"

"Ther furniture, carpets, everything that Mrs. Page used ter have when she lived wid me."

"And you are sure of it?"

"Am Oi sure Oi'm here? Av coorse Oi'm sure ave it. It's all the very same."

"And this is where the woman lives who has visited Mrs. Page at the asylum, claiming to be her sister?"

"It is. An' der yer moind?"

"What?"

"Fut she said when Oi fust spake ter her about ther woman as lucks loike her? Begorra, but Oi guess she remembers somethin'."

"I think so, too. Now, Mrs. Rafferty, I have taken up your time, and besides that, you have been of great service to me, and I may want to use you again before I get through, so do not be offended if I give you this ten-dollar note as a partial recompense for what you have put yourself out to do for me," said I, placing it in her hand.

"Och, but yer ther natest jintleman I iver met in me loife," she said laughing.

"I am glad you think so. But I want to exact a promise from you."

"Fut is it?"

"That you will not mention this visit to the rooms to any one. You can tell your husband——"

"Och, ter ther divil wid Jimmy! Der yer s'pose he'd dare ter upbraid me?"

"I hope not."

"Well, yer can bet yer loife he won't! But he's a noice man."

"I'm glad of it, for you deserve a nice man if any woman does."

"Och, go way y'd her blarney!"

"I mean it. But what I was about to say is this: you can tell him about my taking you to the lunatic asylum, but say nothing to any one at present about our visit to the rooms of this woman."

"Oi won't! There's me hand," and she slapped her big fist into mine with a whack so loud that it attracted the notice of the driver, who evidently thought something had broken.

Arriving at her residence, I further gratified her vanity by alighting and giving her my hand in assisting her from the cab, and again she put on style.

The neighbors' heads were all out of the windows, and Mrs. Rafferty was delighted.

Indeed, she didn't seem to want to leave the sidewalk where she was the cause of so much wonder and envy.

"An' when shall I see yees again?" she asked, making it loud enough for all to hear.

"In a very short time we'll take another ride, Mrs. Rafferty," said I, bound to make it pleasant for her. "Good-afternoon."

"Good-afthernoon," she echoed, and then, with a queenly strut, she wended her way into the general entrance, and was soon lost to view.

I have often thought since then that I would have liked very much to see how she behaved to her neighbors afterward.

I am convinced that she put me down as at least an Irish earl who had called on her, and all because of being in love with her in the old country.

But, however she worked it, she was a good one, and served my purpose even better than a more modest and refined person might have done; and, as I said before, I have often thought that she would make a good side-partner.

Well, what had I got hold of now?

You of course see the drift.

I did, and I took the eight o'clock train back to New York, full to overflowing with what I had made out.

By the time I reached New York and the vicinity of headquarters, it was within fifteen minutes of twelve, my time to report.

I went to a restaurant and took a hurried dinner, for I had had nothing to eat all day, and at the appointed moment I knocked at Chief Matsell's private office door.

"Well?" as usual.

"I have just returned from Philadelphia, chief," said I, saluting.

"Now what?"

I proceeded to tell him all.

"Good! You have got the makings of a first-class detective in you, as I always thought. No one could have done better. You caught right on to my idea. Now do you see it?" he asked proudly.

"I do, chief."

"We are getting right down to hard-pan. As early as eight o'clock to-morrow morning, go to her hotel and arrest this meek-looking, honest-appearing Mrs. Page, and bring her here to headquarters; then leave her to me. After this, return to your old line of looking out for the Wilburs. They have probably returned to town by this time. Remember the coat-sleeve and the tooth-marks. Find the man with those teeth-marks on his right arm, and you have found the murderer of Thomas Page. The other parts of the plot and tragedy will work themselves out almost. Mike has not squealed, but we haven't brought all the screws to bear upon him yet. When we do——. Well, good-night. Report in the morning after you make the arrest, and again at this hour."

That was business for you!

But I felt first-rate over my success, and better yet at his compliments, and so it is not to be wondered at that I put in a good night's sleep that night.

The next morning I went to the hotel where "Mrs. Page" was stopping, for the purpose of arresting her.

But I did not wish to be hasty, or to bring upon her unnecessary shame, even though I believed her to be a fraud.

So I waited until the rising gong had been sounded some ten minutes, and then directed a hall-boy to show me to her room. My object being to arrest her as quietly as possible, and not in the presence of others who might have formed a good opinion of her.

"Mrs. Page is not here, sir," said the boy.

"What! Not here?"

"No, sir. She left yesterday."

"For good?"

"I think so, sir."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because she took her baggage."

That was a pretty good conclusion on the part of the boy.

"Are you certain about it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know where she went to?"

"No, sir."

"Does anybody know?"

"I don't know, sir."

I went to the office to inquire.

"Mrs. Page paid her bill yesterday, and she said she was going to a private boarding-house, as she had business in the city that might take a long time to settle, and the expense of hotel board was more than she cared to incur," said the clerk.

"Indeed! How did she go?"

"A hackman took her and her trunk."

"Can I find that hackman?"

"I don't know. Jerry!" he called, to one of the porters, "do you know who took the lady from No. 18 yesterday?"

"No, sir," replied the porter. "He wasn't one of our hackmen. I think he was one of the standers on Union Square."

"There you are," said the clerk, flashing the diamond in his shirt-front, and turning away from me with a "take-your-change-out-of-that" expression.

Well, was I doomed to get within reach of business in this case without ever getting a grip upon it?

Was the excuse she made to the clerk a genuine one, or had she scented danger?

At all events, there was only one way for me to do now, and that was to go around among the "standers" on Union Square, and if possible find the man who drove her away, and try to get out of him the locality to which he had taken the woman.

This was another tedious job, especially as the drivers there are always on the alert, either for making an extra dollar or protecting their good customers.

But that was the best I could do.

Everything seemed to be working against me, but I knew there was only one way, and that was to fight it out on the line I had started on, come what might.

I left the hotel and sought the curbstones of Union Square.

And I think of it to this day that I did on that occasion the most foolish thing I ever did in my life.

Instead of inventing some plausible excuse for my inquiries and "staking" the drivers assembled there, I showed my badge and announced myself as looking for something crooked.

How many times afterwards did I regret it!

I should have known, as I know now, and as I knew before, that the taxicab and the hack drivers around Union and Madison Squares get their best patronage and largest stakes from these very crooked persons of both sexes.

The result was that nobody knew anything. Nobody had taken a fare from that hotel; and what was it my affair anyway?

(To be continued)

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CURRENT NEWS

A MASTERPIECE FOUND.

A life-size marble statue of Venus upon a pedestal hewn from a single block of marble has been discovered under the floor of a house in the slums of Rome, where the pavement collapsed. The statue was evidently carefully hidden, as it is intact.

PETRIFIED TREE IN MINE

A petrified tree has been uncovered in the bottom of a mine at Washington, Nev. The main trunk of the tree was encountered at a depth of 150 feet and the entire tree and branches have been traced. The tree was evidently hickory, the grain showing straight and perfect. No hickory trees are growing in this region now.

WOMAN'S LARGE COFFIN

Mrs. Theresa Caprai, aged thirty-three, wife of Mike Caprai, an Italian rancher, Priest River, Idaho, died of pneumonia following influenza. She weighed about 300 pounds. She was buried recently from the Catholic church. The largest casket that could be purchased in Spokane was ordered for her body, but difficulty was experienced in placing the body within it. She leaves a husband and three children.

WIFE GETS $5 PER FOR 7,000 BLOWS

Mack Rosenfeldt, a fruit canner residing at No. 615 Octavia street, San Francisco, was hard hit by divorce proceedings when Superior Judge Graham allowed his wife, Mrs. Sadie Rosenfeldt, $5 a blow for 7,000 blows which she said she received from her husband, making a total of $35,000 in alimony.

Mrs. Rosenfeldt said she did not know the exact number of blows her husband had dealt her, but she testified she was sure that 7,000 was not too many.

THE ORIGINAL BLUEBEARD

The Bluebeard of Perrault's fairy tale had the habit of killing his wives, but the first and original Bluebeard was a slayer of children. He was Giles de Laval, Marshal de Retz, a famous soldier, and at one time the richest man in France, and he was executed for his atrocious crimes 478 years ago, December 23, 1440. His beard was of a tint which won for him the popular name later given to Parrault's fairy tale villain.

The original Bluebeard was noted for his piety and his licentiousness. His chapel was the richest in its furnishings in all France, and he gained from the Pope permission to have a gold cross carried before him on his travels. All of this time his accomplices were luring to his castles little girls of the vicinity, all of whom were put to death by the monster. Just how many he made way with is unknown, but they are said to have numbered several hundred. At length he was arrested, and calmly confessed his crimes, and the judges, horrified by the terrible revelations, ordered him executed on the spot.

START ON $1; NOW RICH

Oscar and Walter Poppert, twin sons of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Poppert, of Milwaukee, Wis., had less than $1 between them when they left home fifteen years ago to seek their fortunes. They went to Alaska. When they returned home the other day for a visit they said they owned Alaska mining property worth several hundred thousand dollars. They will go back to Alaska to develop their property. It is on Midnight Creek, just opposite the Guggenheim claims. The men earned their grubstake by whaling and cattle herding.

MISTAKES MAN'S FOOT FOR RABBIT

Archie Vollemaer, of Detroit, Mich., while rabbit hunting had two toes shot away by his hunting companion, Emerick Lanoo. Vollemaer sued Lanoo in the Circuit Court for $10,000. It seems the rabbit ran under a lumber pile and when a log rolled over, Lanoo thought it was the rabbit and shot. Instead it was Vollemaer's foot. The jury returned a verdict of no cause for action. It was not brought out in the trial what happened to the rabbit.

SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY BY CAT

While the cat has often served the purposes of science, it has generally been not to her own comfort and frequently with the loss of her life. One cat in Australia, however, proved her usefulness in the advancement of human knowledge without being compelled to sacrifice herself on the altar of science.

This cat belonged to a member of an expedition in the interior of Australia. One day she brought to her master a strange little animal which she had captured among the rocks.

The man handed the animal over to the naturalist of the party, who saw at once that pussy had made an important discovery. The animal she had caught was a new and apparently rare species of the tribe of insect-eating marsupials belonging to the great family of which the giant kangaroo is the most conspicuous representative.

A FREAK METEOR

A meteorite which fell in Zululand on August 1, 1918, has been examined by Prof. Stanley and was found to consist almost entirely of nickel-iron alloy, and is therefore classed as a siderite; it is coated with a skin of magnetic oxide exhibiting flow lines and shows numerous "thumb-marks." An analytical investigation shows the presence of iron, nickel, silicon, sulphur, carbon, phosphorus, aluminum, magnesium, platinum and chlorine, the bulk of the meteorite being composed of iron. The fall was accompanied by an explosion which was heard for a great distance, and which was followed by the sight of the rapidly-moving body, accompanied by a spiral trail of smoke and a low, hissing crackling noise. A native women narrowly escaped being struck by the missile.

LIVED 21 YEARS AFTER REMOVAL OF STOMACH

Mrs. Laura Maggini died in San Francisco at the age of eighty-six years, credited by local surgeons with having contributed a remarkable chapter to surgical history surviving an operation performed twenty-one years ago, when surgeons removed her stomach to save her life.

At the time the operation was performed, according to relatives, it was believed that Mrs. Maggini would not live more than two or three months. She rallied, however, and improved steadily and until recently took an active interest in domestic and philanthropic work.

HOG WITH FIVE FEET

Bennie Dearmore, son of Lee Dearmore, a farmer, who lives west of Mountain Home, Ark., says that he has a hog which he has no trouble keeping track of.

It makes a track different from any hog in Baxter County. It is a five-footed hog, and makes five tracks. The extra foot extends out just below the knee of its right foreleg, and touches the ground the same as the regular foot on that leg. In other ways the animal is normal and large enough to kill. None of the other pigs in the litter in which it was born was deformed.

BLUE STAR TURNED GOLD

Mrs. Annie Kilburn Kilmer, mother of the late Sergt. Joyce Kilmer, of the 165th Infantry, the poet, says that the blue enamel star on the little service flag pin he gave her on leaving for France mysteriously turned to gold when he was killed in action.

"He was killed July 30," said Mrs. Kilmer. "I was in Litchfield, Conn., when the news reached me, in August, and I said to my husband, 'I shall always wear the little service flag he gave me, but I'll pin it on a bow of black ribbon.' While I was doing so, to my great astonishment I saw the blue star had changed to gold!

"I have showed it to many and none can explain it. Many jewelers have seen it and they offer no solution."

WILL STOP FISH

Thousands of dollars annually will be saved, it is expected, in the Pacific Northwest fisheries industry by a device invented by Henry T. Burkey, of Oklahoma. The invention is an electric fish stop.

Because there has been no efficient way to prevent fish following wrong streams, hatcheries have lost thousands of dollars every year. Nets across the mouths of rivers have proved costly and inefficient. Keeping fish away from intake and irrigation ditches is a difficult problem solved by the electric fish stop.

The invention, which establishes electric fields of graduated voltage across a stream, is said to be cheaper than any device so far conceived, as the power is furnished by the force of the current turning a turbine dynamo.

A field of twenty-five volts is located farthest down stream and small fish coming in contact with the electric current are turned back into the main current of the river. Fields of increasing voltage act on fish of larger size. Fish are extremely sensitive to electric currents and the water greatly increases the conductivity of the electricity.

When Burkey has completed arrangements with the Northwest fisheries he will go to Alaska at the invitation of the Alaska Bureau of Fisheries to demonstrate his electric stop in the North.

TALLEST SMOKESTACK

The last brick has been laid upon the tallest smokestack in the world. The stack was finished after a little more than six months of work uninterrupted by any accident or labor trouble.

The new stack at the Washoe smelter in Anaconda, Mont., is the tallest in the world. It is 585 feet 1½ inches high. Its base of reinforced concrete is 86 feet outside diameter, 75 inside. At the top the inside diameter is 60 feet. It weighs about 34,000 tons and is built of brick manufactured at the Anaconda Company's plant here. The stack contains 6,672,214 brick and 68,845 sacks of cement.

It has a capacity per minute of 3,000,000 cubic feet of hot gas mixed with 1,000,000 cubic feet of cooling air In comparison with this monster stack, the Tacoma smelter stack is 572 feet 10½ inches high; that in Japan 570 feet, and that at Great Falls, Mont., 510 feet.

WOODEN SHOES BETTER THAN LEATHER

The scarcity of leather in Switzerland and its almost prohibitive price have brought wooden soled shoes into use quite generally as a substitute. Even before the war some wooden-soled shoes were worn, although the sabot such as was common in France and Belgium was not at all popular.

The progress of the war has led to the establishment of extensive factories engaged in the production of wooden soled shoes by a series of machines constructed especially for the purpose.

The wooden soles are better non-conductors than leather, and consequently keep the feet dry and warm. If we ignore fashion and prejudice, there are a number of reasons which recommend their use. The employee is supplied free by employer. It is held that the efficiency of the factory worker is thus increased and that the outlay is more than returned after a short time through increased output of the employee, who is less liable to such diseases as arise through cold or damp feet.

WAR BOOMS USE OF OPALS FOR JEWELRY

Opals are found abundantly in the United States, and the war, by curtailing the importations of foreign gems, has given them wide popularity in jewelry.

Opals consist of what is known as colloid silica. That is silica in an amorphous state and combined with water. The play of color is an optical effect, due to an accidental structure of the stone, which is permeated by a number of minute fissures, into which a thin film of air has penetrated. The extreme thinness of this air film causes the optical effect known as interference. If an opal is powdered, it is no longer colored, as in the case with rubies, emeralds and sapphires, but yields a dirty white powder. Generally the opal, as found, does not have the gem structure throughout, parts of it being dull and lustreless like flint.

This peculiar structure is not confined to the opal. In the mineral known as lumachelol or fire marble, the same effect is seen as in a limestone. But opal is the only mineral which combines the structure with sufficient durability for use as a gem stone, and it possesses only just sufficient hardness for this purpose. It is one of the softest and least durable of jewel stones. Its structure, combined with its fragility, has involved the opal in a mass of superstitions and romance from time immemorial.

COW CLIMBS FLIGHT OF STAIRS

When help was scarce this fall Herbert F. Robinson, a soap manufacturer of Syracuse, N. Y., hired Mrs. Mary Thomas as caretaker on his Platt Hill estate, Winsted, Conn. Robinson has thirteen head of stock.

The caretaker put one of the Jerseys in the hay barn. The other morning the cow was missing. Hearing a noise in the hayloft the caretaker discovered the cow. She had climbed the stairway of thirteen steps.

How to get the animal down the caretaker did not know. Neighbors were summoned. One suggested covering the stairway with hay. After the steps had been thus obliterated the cow was laid on her side and, with a united effort, shoved down to the lower floor. She went over once and landed safely on her feet.

SCULPTURE BY PHOTOGRAPHY

A process for producing basreliefs by photography is the fruit of the invention of an Italian scientist.

The basis of the invention is the property possessed by a film of chromium gelatin of swelling in proportion to the intensity of the light falling upon it. The swelling is greater with a low than with a high intensity, so that the light passing through a photographic negative produces upon a chromium gelatin plate a positive in distinct relief.

The transparency of an ordinary negative, however, is not truly proportional to the relief of the original model, but by an ingenious automatic device involving double exposure this difficulty is avoided and a negative is obtained having its lights and shades correctly graded to produce the effect of relief.

GOLD QUARTZ PAVEMENTS

In Dutch Guiana a satisfactory method of paving has been worked out, even though little of the capital and satisfactory construction materials road builders ordinarily use are available. Paramaribo, the capital, being in need of a stretch of pavement, local engineers set out to find something to build with. The only suitable material within reasonable distance, according to *Popular Mechanics*, proved to be quartz, a mineral glassy in appearance and almost as hard as diamond. To get this to the city entailed an expense of $2 per ton. No rock-crushing machinery being available, the quartz was dumped at convenient intervals along the street, and natives hired to break it up, piece by piece, with small hammers. The women and youngsters took particular interest in this employment, squatting in the dust and hot sun and pounding lustily for twelve hours at a stretch. Though receiving but fifty cents a day for such work, individuals sometimes added to their earnings by finds of gold in the bits of quartz. Cases are on record of an occasional dusky lad accumulating as much as $150 in this way in six weeks' time.

FIRST ARTIFICIAL TEETH

It may not be generally known that the father of his country was the first American to wear artificial teeth. By the time the War of the Revolution had ended he had parted company with most of the outfit which nature had given him. An ingenious physician and dentist of New York City undertook the then unusual task of re-equipment and produced at length a full set of artificial teeth. These are now, of course, a dental curiosity, and offer an additional proof of the heroism of our first President, for it is a matter of fact that General Washington wore those teeth for many years and, so far as we know, never complained of them. The teeth were carved from ivory and riveted, wired and clamped to a somewhat ponderous gold plate. Three large clamps, in particular, figure conspicuously in the roof of the mouth, and must have caused difficulty, if not anguish. There were an upper and an under set; and the two were connected and held in position relatively by a long spiral spring on each side. Nevertheless, Washington wore them long and well; a fact sufficiently attested by the worn and dinted condition of both teeth and plate. At the last account these teeth were the property of a dental institution in Baltimore.

TOLD HE WAS DEAD

John H. Everett, of 123 Bird street, Wilmington, Del., was awakened late one night to receive a telegram from Washington conveying the information that he had been killed in action in France.

Still drowsy after coming from a warm bed to answer the doorbell, Everett read the telegram twice and began to think he was having a nightmare.

The fact is Everett had never been in France. Neither has he worn a military uniform. He is within the draft age, but was never called for service.

He returned the message to the War Department, quoting Mark Twain to the effect that the report of his death was "grossly exaggerated." Everett is employed as a clerk.

EVEN ANTS ARE USEFUL

In Sudan *Notes and Records*, a plea is made on behalf of the white ant, which has naturally acquired a bad reputation among European residents. The characteristic feature of the climate of the Sudan is the rapid growth of vegetation promoted by seasonal rains or artificial irrigation, followed by a period of drought and desiccation. The white ant attacks vegetation only when it is weakened by drought or disease, and in that case the sooner it is destroyed the better. But for the activity of the white ant the whole of the fertile parts of the Sudan would, in a very few years, be covered with an impenetrable layer of dead vegetation; and the only alternative method to clear it off would be by the agency of fires, the dangers of which are obvious.

CATTLE THAT EAT FISH

The use of fish as food for cattle is an idea more novel than agreeable. According to *Nature*, however, it is a common practice in various parts of the world. In Shetland and Iceland the farmers feed dry salt fish to cattle, sheep, and even to horses. Cecil Wood, describing experiments of this nature, mentions that certain special cattle, kept for display at the village festivals in Nandyal, in India, are fed with mutton, and adds that it is a fairly common practice to make use of bandicoots by pounding them in a mortar and feeding them to cattle. In Mr. Wood's experiments, two lots of heifers were fed on dried fish diet and normal diet, respectively.

The animals took a little time to get used to the fish, but they ate it readily enough. At the end of six months the fish-fed heifers showed an average increase in weight of fifty-four pounds, as against seventy pounds for the normally fed animals.

A COLORADO CAVE MAN

High up on the breast of the Rocky Mountains, twenty-five miles from Pagosa Springs, living in what once was a den of wild animals, William J. McClelland, Deputy United States Marshal, has found William Hardick, seventy-five years old, the "Mystery Man of the Mountains," a man who had never heard of the war and who had been out of touch with civilization for nearly forty years.

Until McClelland found Hardick, who is being sued in the United States Court for grazing wild horses in the national forest without obtaining a permit and paying a fee no one in that section of the country, except "Denver" Lathan, owner of a ranch eleven miles from the abode of the recluse, had ever seen him, says the *Denver Post*.

His home is in the mountain fastness. No trail leads to the door of his den, burrowed into the hillside. It is hidden from the outside world by a dense growth of pine, cedar and quaking aspen trees.

Deputy Marshal McClelland, with "Denver" Latham as a guide, spent two days hunting out the home of the recluse. During that time they were lost in a snowstorm which brushed their horses' bellies.

Long, matted gray hair hangs down Hardick's back. He has a long, flowing beard and he is absolutely black. The man, in the opinion of Deputy McClelland, has not known the enjoyment of a bath for years. How he lives no one in the country can tell. He had a rifle slung across his arm when the deputy marshal found him crawling from the hole, which seems to be the means of getting in and out of his cave, but how he obtains ammunition for the weapon is a mystery.

The man knew absolutely nothing about the war or its ending. Until Deputy McClelland arrived at his cave last Saturday the man had not seen a human being nor talked with one for five years.

The postmistress at Pagosa Springs, who was born and reared there, had never seen the man. She knew of him only through rumor. Occasionally a letter reaches the Pagosa Springs postoffice addressed to William Hardick. The mail is never called for and, without knowledge of where to deliver it, the mail remains in the office for a while and is then sent to the Dead Letter Office.

Upon his arrival at the cave Deputy McClelland discovered that the worn places in the wild man's clothing were patched with pasteboard, probably obtained at the deserted camps of hunters or tourists who ventured into the hills in the summer.

The wild horses owned by Hardick are absolutely beyond his control. When he went into the hills, some forty years ago, he had some fine animals. They ran wild in the mountains, multiplied and now represent a herd of considerable size. While he asserts his ownership of the animals, Hardick has never been near enough to the herd in the last twenty years to ascertain how large it now is.

The wild man told McClelland that he would never appear in the United States Court to answer to the charge made by the government. The action is a civil case and the government agent could not arrest his man. Whether the government will take action of some kind to compel the aged man to appear in court will have to be determined. At this time he is absolutely beyond the pale of the law and defies the government to come and get him. He says he is looking for a fight.

Evidently a man of refinement and educatien, rumor in that country has it that he was driven into the mountains years ago through a disappointment in a love affair and has lived as a cave man ever since, losing all interest in civilization.

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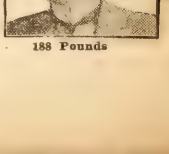

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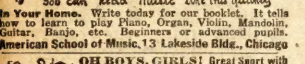

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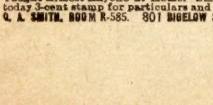
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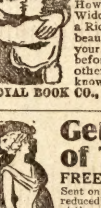

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